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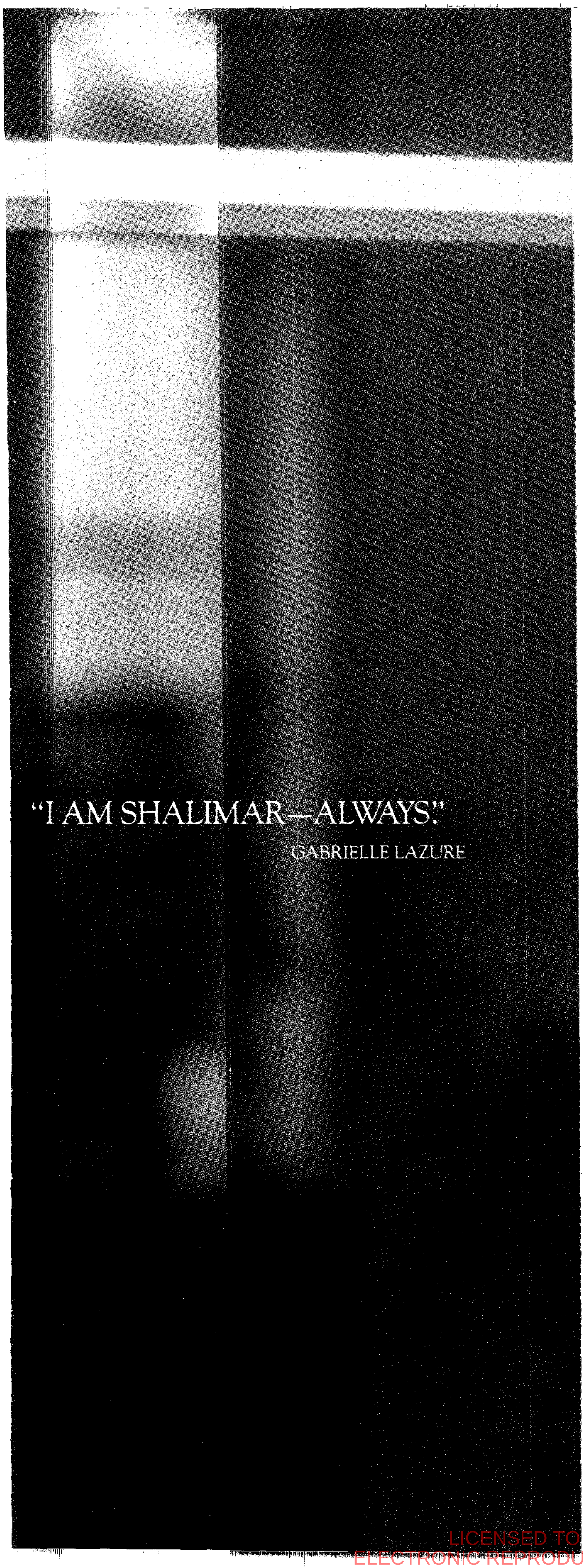
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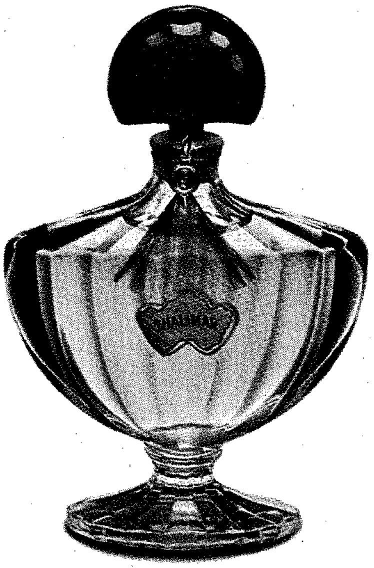

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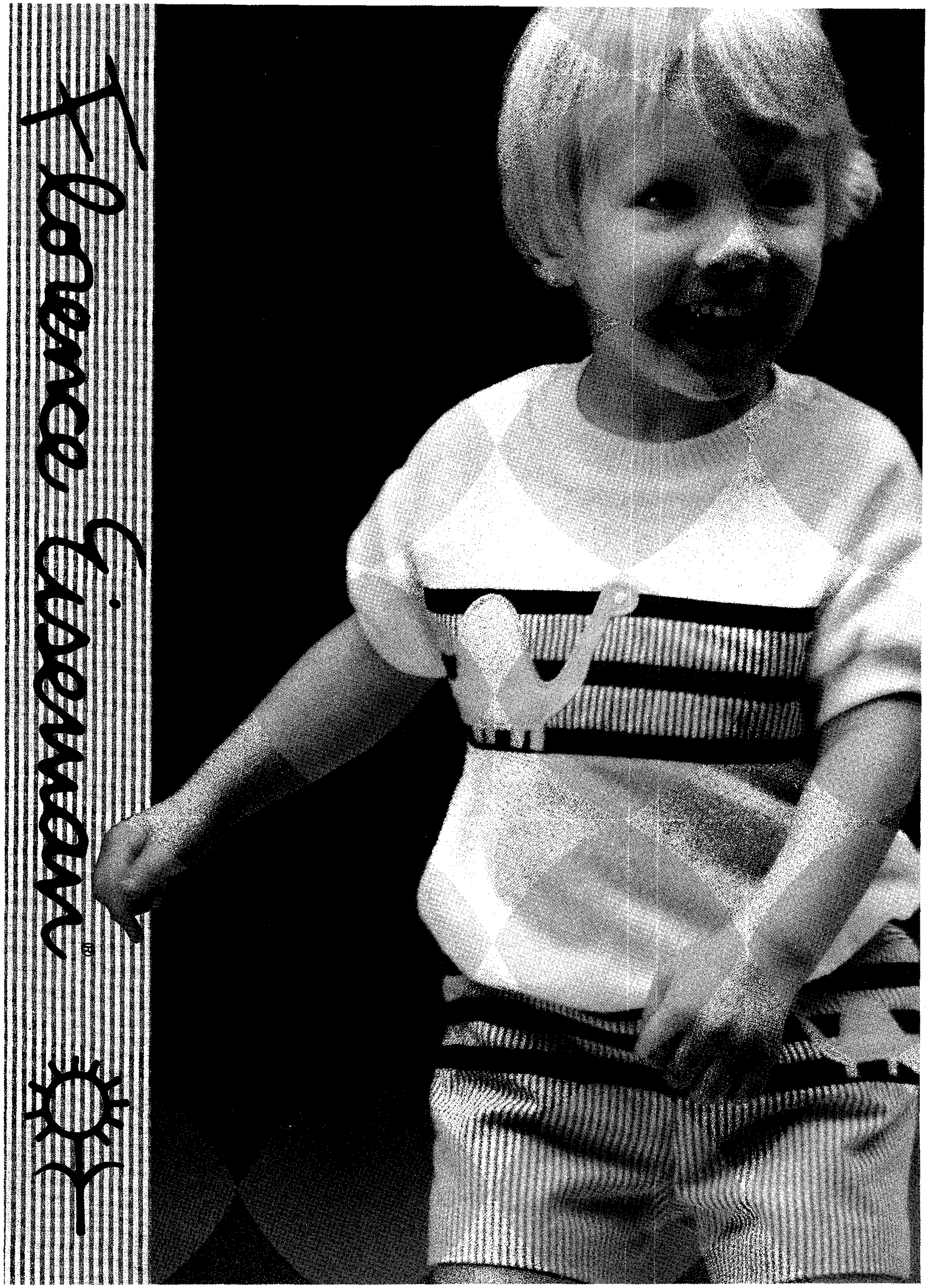

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

JUST recently, distracted by a spate of unusually fine weather, we wandered down Theatre Row and looked in on the one-act-play festival that the Manhattan Punch Line Theatre is producing at the Judith Anderson. The storefront theatres along Theatre Row (42nd St. between Ninth and Tenth) offer a pleasant relief not only from the strain of Broadway—extravagant expectation leading to extravagant disappointment—but from its spirit and mores as well. The Punch Line is the sort of place where the guy behind the refreshment counter will trust you for the price of a couple of chocolate-chip cookies and a coffee until the next intermission because he can't change your ten.

The festival, which runs through the end of February and consists of two programs, is a chance to see what some of our funniest young playwrights—Howard Korder, Bill Bozzone, Mark O'Donnell—have been up to. It's also a chance to see some first-rate actors, like Sarah Eckhardt, whom we had heard about but never seen, and Steven Gilborn, whom we see all too rarely. Miss Eckhardt makes an impression even playing a bit part in Korder's "Wonderful Party!" (Evening A), and Mr. Gilborn shifts deftly between roles in Rich Orloff's political satire "The News from St. Petersburg" and in Bozzone's anti-life-style play "Good Honest Food" (both Evening B). The surprise gem of the festival, though, is the work of a newcomer, Stephen Gregg, whose wistful comedy about the tenacity of neurosis ("Sex Lives of Superheroes") contains the best extended metaphor since Virgil.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22			

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for the schedule and ticket availability.)

Gus and Al—A comedy by Albert Innaurato about a character named Al, who travels back in time and befriends the composer Gustav Mahler. Seen here last spring in a workshop production. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Hizzoner!—Tony Lo Bianco is the only actor in a play by Paul Shyre about Fiorello LaGuardia, perhaps New York's original "colorful mayor." In previews. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

In a Pig's Valise—A humorous musical salute to the detective films of the forties, with words (book and lyrics) by Eric Overmyer and a score by August Darnell, a.k.a. Kid Creole. Directed and choreographed by Graciela Daniele. Opens Feb. 14 at 8. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Jerome Robbins' Broadway—A *retrospective* of Robbins' non-ballet choreography. Expect excerpts from "Fiddler on the Roof," "West Side Story," and "Peter Pan," to name a few. In previews. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Love's Labor's Lost—Shakespeare's comedy, set in the nineteen-thirties. William Converse-Roberts, Richard Libertini, Christine Dunford, Mark Moses, and Roma Downey are in the cast; Gerald Freedman is the director. Previews through Feb. 21. Opens Feb. 22 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

Measure for Measure—A darker comedy by the Bard, this one with Len Cariou, Kate Burton, Ethyl Eichelberger, and Jack Weston. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

New York Theatre Workshop—American productions of two contemporary German plays, presented in rotating repertory: **MERCEDES**, by Thomas Brasch, has a preview Feb. 14 and opens Feb. 15, and **THE NEST**, by Franz Xaver Kroetz, begins previews Feb. 16. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 279-4200.)

Other People's Money—The Hartford Stage Company's production of a comedy by Jerry Sterner about a Wall Street takeover artist who tries to acquire a small family business. Previews Feb. 13-15. Opens Feb. 16 at 6:45. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Shirley Valentine—A comedy about a Liverpool housewife by Willy Russell, who also wrote "Educating Rita." Pauline Collins (whom we remember as Sarah in "Upstairs, Downstairs") has the title, and only, role. (She also played it in London.) Simon Callow is the director. Previews through Feb. 15. Opens Feb. 16 at 6:45. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Sueños—A joint production by Mabou Mines and Intar of a work that celebrates the spirit of Latin America through poetry, music, and dance. Directed by Ruth Maleczech, with an original score by Herschel Garfein. In Spanish and English. Previews Feb. 18-19. Opens at 8 on Feb. 19, and runs through March 5. (Triplex, 199 Chambers St. 618-1980.)

NEW THIS SEASON

Black and Blue—An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, Bunny Briggs, Jimmy Slyde, and a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/6/89; under Dancing.) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.)

Born Yesterday—Madeline Kahn's performance as Billie Dawn (the role that made Judy Holliday famous) is the only good thing about this revival of Garson Kanin's 1946 political fable. Ed Asner is entirely inadequate as the scrap-metal tycoon who makes the mistake of hiring a *New Republic* writer to educate his mistress. So, unfortunately, is Daniel Hugh Kelly, who plays the journalist. (2/13/89) (46th Street Theatre, 226 W. 46th St. 246-0102.)

Brilliant Traces—Kevin Anderson and Joan Cusack in a play by Cindy Lou Johnson. Terry Kinney is the director. Presented by Circle Rep. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Cafe Crown—A revival of the late Hy Kraft's mash note to the Café Royal, a onetime Mecca for Yiddish actors, writers, and intellectuals on the Lower East Side. The play, first produced in 1942, is filled with jokes, most of which pay off. Eli Wallach, as a former star, Anne Jackson, as his wife, and Bob Dishy, as a busy, bossy waiter, play the leading roles in this fine production, directed by Martin Charnin. Santo Loquasto designed the gorgeous setting. Seen recently at the Public, the show begins performances on Broadway Feb. 18. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 719-4099.)

Cantorial—Anthony Fusco, Lesly Kahn, and Woody Romoff in a play by Ira Levin, the author of "Deathtrap." Seen last fall at the Jewish Repertory Theatre, it resumes performances Feb. 14. (Lambs Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Cocktail Hour—A dramatist returns to his native city in upstate New York to break the news to his prosperous family that he has written a play about them and to ask their permission to have it produced. More easily said than done. A. R. Gurney's humor has never been more sparkling, his characters never more convincing or engaging. The play is as sensitive as it is funny, and the actors do it full justice, under Jack O'Brien's direction. Nancy Marchand gives a marvellous performance as the hero's mother, and Holland Taylor, Bruce Davison, and Keene Curtis are fine, too. (11/7/88) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Dalton's Back—A play by Keith Curran, with John Dossett and Colleen Davenport. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

EN GARDE

When George Washington rode into New York on November 25, 1783, he didn't need to bear arms—the English had skipped town earlier that morning. Thanks to vandals, the Union Square statue erected in 1856 to commemorate his arrival hasn't carried a sword in years. The Brits are back in force these days, and though it may be mere coincidence, Henry Kirke Brown's bronze equestrian statue has been refurbished, courtesy of the Municipal Art Society's Adopt-a-Monument program. But where's the missing weapon? Ask Mayor Koch. A ceremony on February 22nd at which Koch was scheduled to restore the sword to Washington's scabbard has been postponed, because the Mayor won't be around that day. Is this any way to treat a guy on his birthday?

The Devil's Disciple—A tame production of Shaw's dashing melodrama. (11/28/88) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 19.)

Eastern Standard—An imitation comedy that is as tedious as it is trendy. (11/14/88) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Equity Library Theatre—A revival of Lanford Wilson's 1980 play **fifth of july** is the latest in this season's series of eight productions. (103rd St. and Riverside Dr. Closes Feb. 26. For information about tickets, for which contributions are requested, call 663-2028.)

Forbidden Broadway 1989—A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. The performers are Toni DiBuono, Roxie Lucas, David B. McDonald, and Michael McGrath—inspired mimics all. (9/26/88) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Happy Birthday, Mama—A black comedy by Roberto Cossa, an Argentine playwright. Performances are in English Wednesdays through Fridays; in Spanish Saturdays and Sundays. (Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 354-1293. Closes Feb. 26.)

The Heidi Chronicles—Wendy Wasserstein's new play looks at first glance like standard baby-boom playwriting fare, but some alchemical combination of graceful-mindedness and good writing enables her to capture, lampoon, and transcend her generation all at the same time. With a superb cast, led by Joan Allen. (12/26/88) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes here Feb. 19; reopens on Broadway, at the Plymouth, March 1.)

Hotel Martinique—A music-theatre piece by Kevin Malony that was inspired by Jonathan Kozol's 1988 article on the homeless. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318. Closes Feb. 26.)

I Could Go On Lip-Synching!—This one-man variety show made up of cultural arcana is kind of weird, kind of quirky, and kind of brilliant. Performed by John Epperson and written by him and Justin Ross (who directed), it uses the rhetorical tactics of drag theatre to attack some of the Big Questions, managing not so much to raise lip-synching to an art as to transform aural montage into psychodrama. Certainly this is the strangest show in town. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556.)

The Kathy and Mo Show: Parallel Lives—Comedy skits and vignettes about gender and its role in society, written and performed by Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394.)

Legs Diamond—A musical built around Peter Allen, the only man in America less charismatic than George Bush. Mr. Allen put this show together like a leveraged buyout, and it has no book, no lyrics, and no good songs or dance numbers. The best that can be said of his co-star, Julie Wilson, is that she seems completely out of context. Warning: This one isn't even a hoot. (1/9/89) (Mark Hellinger, 237 W. 51st St. 246-0102.)

Light Opera of Manhattan—Through Feb. 19: Romberg's **student prince**. . . . ¶ Starting Feb. 22: Gilbert and Sullivan's **gondoliers**. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Macbeth—An in-the-round production of Shakespeare's play, directed by Nicholas Mahon, of the Royal Shakespeare Company. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. For information about tickets, call 228-6621.)

Manhattan Punch Line—Presenting a festival of new one-act comedies. Evening A: "Wonderful Party!," by Howard Korder; "The Gettysburg Sound Bite," by Ted Tally; "One Monday," by Matt Cutugno; "Seven Menus," by David Ives; and "Sex Lives of Superheroes," by Stephen Gregg. . . . ¶ Evening B: "The News from St. Petersburg," by Rich Orloff; "Requiem for a Heavyweight," by Mark O'Donnell; "Seeing Someone," by Laurence Klavan; "Pillow Talk," by Peter Tolan; and "Good Honest Food," by Bill Bozzone. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 26.)

Negro Ensemble Company—"We" is the umbrella title for a pair of plays by Charles Fuller—"Sally" and "Prince"—about recently freed slaves during the Civil War, some of them at loose ends and others in the Union Army. The plays are non-vintage Fuller, but they're interesting all the same. The acting is of the N.E.C.'s usual high quality. Douglas Turner Ward directed. The plays will be done in rotating repertory. (1/9/89) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 246-8545. Closes Feb. 26.)

The Night Hank Williams Died—A play by Larry L. King. (Reviewed in this issue.) (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Our Town—Spalding Gray's monotonous and cynical performance as the Stage Manager almost blights this revival of Thornton Wilder's masterpiece, but there is good work by Roberta Maxwell, Peter Maloney, Frances Conroy, and Eric Stoltz. (12/19/88) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Play Ball—Ron Nakahara in a new comedy by R. A. Shiomi. A production of the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre. (Apple Corps Theatre, 336 W. 20th St. Closes Feb. 25. For information about tickets, call 245-2660.)

Rumors—This farce about a party to celebrate a couple's tenth anniversary (the host and hostess are mysteriously absent) may well be the funniest play that Neil Simon has ever written. It is acted to perfection by Christine Baranski, André Gregory, Mark Nelson, Ron Leibman, Lisa Banes, Joyce Van Patten, Charles Brown, and Cynthia Darlow, under the impeccable direction of Gene Saks. (11/28/88) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Songs of Paradise—A musical based on the works of the Yiddish poet Itsik Manger. In Yiddish and English; with a book by Miriam Hoffman and Rena Berkowicz Burow, and music by Rosalie Gerut. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

The Taffetas—Four talented young women, impersonating a group of singing sisters, perform hits from the fifties. The show, conceived by Rick Lewis as a live broadcast from the early days of television, represents yet another trip down memory lane. Still, for what it is, it's very well done. With Jody Abrahams, Karen Curlee, Melanie Mitchell, and Tia Speros. (Top of the Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 982-9292.)

A Tale of Two Cities—Everett Quinton's over-the-top one-man version of Dickens' novel has Miss Pross literally hanging from the ceiling. Unfortunately, his performance is more spirited than it is consistently funny. Best is the word "BLOOD" scrawled on the bathroom wall. (Charles Ludlam Theatre, One Sheridan Square. 691-2271.)

The Unguided Missile—Estelle Parsons is Martha Mitchell in a new play by David Wolpe. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

Without Apologies—A play by Thom Thomas, with Kurt Knudson, Carrie Nye, and Pauline Flanagan. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 760-9810.)

ILONA GRANET

Jerome Robbins

LONG RUNS

anything goes: This exuberant revival is primarily a celebration of Cole Porter himself. The company, which includes Patti LuPone, Anthony Heald, Bill McCutcheon, and Howard McGillin, does more than justice to the words and score. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.) . . . **cats:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to the sets and costumes of John Napier. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **a chorus line:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **driving miss daisy:** Frances Sternhagen and Earle Hyman star in Alfred Uhry's play, which tells of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. Directed by Ron Lagomarsino. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.) . . . **the fantasticks:** The longest-running long run. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **frankie and johnny in the clair de lune:** Terrence McNally's enchanting comedy about sex and the sudden onset of love in an apartment on Tenth Avenue. With Bill Smitrovich and Caroline Aaron. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394.) . . . **into the woods:** This musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine is an attempt to show what lurks beneath the surface of conventional fairy tales. The songs are beautiful or funny—sometimes both. Directed by Mr. Lapine. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-6363.) . . . **m. butterfly:** David Henry Hwang's funny, mysterious, and often beautiful play, with David Dukes and B. D. Wong. John Rubinstein replaces Mr. Dukes on Feb. 20. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220.) . . . **me and my girl:** An infelicitously rehabilitated British musical out of the thirties. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **les misérables:** The real stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.) . . . **nunsense:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **oil city symphony:** Mike Craver, Mark Hardwick, Michelle Horman, and Mary Murfitt, gifted and sophisticated singers and instrumentalists, appear as a quartet of dedicated hicks reuniting at their small-town high school in this very funny musical. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.) . . . **the phantom of the opera:** The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **sarafina!:** This South African musical, an explosion of talent, was conceived, written, and directed by Mbongeni Ngema, who also, with Hugh Masekela, composed and arranged the score. The acting, dancing, and singing are a wonder. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.) . . . **steel magnolias:** This first play by Robert Harling is set in a beauty shop in a small town in Louisiana and consists mainly of the often amusing, wisecracking chatter of the proprietress, her assistant, and four steady customers. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

DANCE

STAY in New York and see the world. The next sentence should logically read "This is a week rich in ethnic dance." But the phrase "ethnic dance," though it may make a useful label for a writer, suffocates a dancegoer's curiosity. It has come to suggest an idea of dancing that is frozen in space and time, is compromised by theatrical staging, and is meaningless except to enthusiasts. Scores of unfathomably complex dance styles, generally assumed to be classless, get

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

DANCE—Cont'd

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lumped together as ethnic, but in 1989 an "ethnic" Ghanaian court dance may have as much in common with a reconstruction from the court of Louis XIV as with contemporary Ghanaian disco.

The point is that "ethnic" can mean anything. The interesting issues in the nineties will be "What makes this authentic?" and "What makes it live?" These are the questions that underlie the subtle programming of "France Danse," a February 22nd benefit for the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library (Alice Tully Hall, 362-1911). The program ranges from dances of the eighteenth century, by Catherine Turocy's New York Baroque Dance Company, to the world première of Peter Martins' "Sports et Divertissements," which uses a score by Erik Satie. The themes of classical modernism and contemporary reconstruction merge in the solo "Vestris," an homage to the great eighteenth-century virtuoso which was created in 1969 by the Soviet choreographer Leonid Jacobson for the great twentieth-century virtuoso Mikhail Baryshnikov. American Ballet Theatre's Johan Renvall will make his début in it. He has been coached by Baryshnikov and Irina Jacobson, the choreographer's widow.

New York City Ballet—Feb. 14 at 8: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 8: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,'" "Orpheus," and "Behind the China Dogs." . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 8: "Western Symphony," "Orpheus," and "Behind the China Dogs." . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 8: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 2: "Apollo," "Ives, Songs," and "Serenade." . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Ives, Songs," and "Space." . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 1: "Serenade," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Tea-Rose," and "Behind the China Dogs." . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 7: "Divertimento from 'Le Baiser de la Fée,'" "Behind the China Dogs," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 8: "Orpheus," "Tea-Rose," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," and "Space." . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Apollo," and "Space." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 26.)

Feld Ballet—Feb. 14 at 8: "Aurora II," "Adieu," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 7: "Aurora I," "Asia," "Love Song Waltzes," and a work performed by students from the Feld's new ballet school. (A benefit.) . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 8: "Aurora I," "Aurora II," and "Intermezzo No. 1." . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 8: "The Consort," "Intermezzo No. 1," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 8: "Petipa Notwithstanding," "Shadow's Breath" (New York première), "Cortège Parisien," and "Embraced Waltzes." . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 2: "Aurora I," "Medium:Rare," "Asia," and "Love Song Waltzes." . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 7:30: "The Consort," "Intermezzo No. 1," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 8: "Harbinger," "Kore," "Over the Pavement," and "Love Song Waltzes." . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 8: "Aurora I," "Medium:Rare," "Asia," and "Love Song Waltzes." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through March 12.)

Charles Moulton—Known for his precision ball-passing choreography and his electrified tap shoes, Moulton has choreographed and directed "Dangerous Glee Club," a new dance-music-theatre work. Co-conceived by Steve Elson, who wrote the score. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Tuesdays through Fridays at 8, and Saturdays at 7 and 9. Through March 4.)

Pilar Rioja—Performances of classical Spanish dance, including, of course, flamenco. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Feb. 13 and Feb. 16-17 at 8; Feb. 18 at 3; and Feb. 19 at 7. Through Feb. 26.)

Matthew Nash Music and Dance—Matthew Nash ("The Elements of Style," 1981) stars in "*12 Most Famous Fashion Models of 1952*," a work he based, in large part, on Irving Penn's photographs "Twelve Beauties" and "Ballet Society." With set and costume designs by Sylvia Taalsohn. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Feb. 16-18 at 8, and Feb. 19 at 3.)

Thunderbird American Indian Dancers—In Native American dances. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Feb. 17-18 at 8, and Feb. 19 at 2 and 5.)

"By Herself"—Vicky Shick and Irene Hultman, former members of the Trisha Brown company, join Johanna Boyce, Risa Jaroslow, and Marta Renzi in a program of solos. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Feb. 17-18 at 11.)

Izulu Dance Theatre—Forceful, often acrobatic South African dance, tribal and urban. With vocalist Thuli Dumakude, and the musical groups Thokoza and Bayeza. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 18 at 8.)

"Japan's Traditional Dance—Now"—A program of *buyo*, Japanese classical dancing, performed by leading native practitioners. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Feb. 18 at 8, and Feb. 19 at 2.)

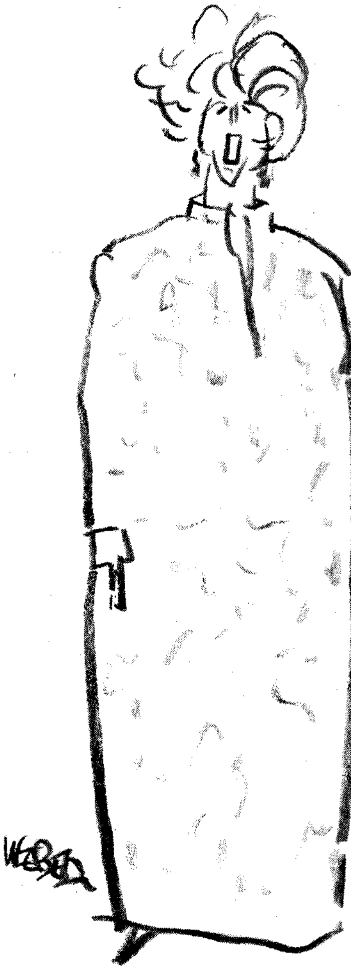
NIGHT LIFE

Fred (Too Slim) LaBour, a member of a cowboy music and humor trio called Riders in the Sky, once introduced an old romantic cowboy tune to a Bottom Line audience as "a song for all you lovers out there in the dark." A tiny amount of applause followed this announcement, and Too Slim, who plays bass fiddle, sings low harmony, and hides his mouth under a bandito mustache, said, "I think I hear the sound of one lover clapping." It's possible he was mistaken; he may have heard the sound of two lovers giving each other high-fives. Which brings us to Valentine's Day, a non-holiday on which alternate-side-of-the-street parking is not suspended but which many people feel compelled to celebrate anyway. Those inclined to celebrate it publicly and within earshot of music will find many rooms eager to accommodate them.

To start at the top—altitudinally speaking—there is Rainbow & Stars, a new cabaret attached to the refurbished Rainbow Room, where the fine Rosemary Clooney is singing. Sixty-five flights down and twenty-one blocks south, at the Ballroom, Peggy Lee is making her soft, slinky way through "Fever," "Johnny Guitar," and a Ma Rainey blues. Farther south still, in the un-swank basement quarters of the Village Vanguard, Illinois Jacquet, a Swing Age tenor saxophonist whose name alone signifies coattails flying, leads a big band. But Jacquet's band doesn't play only flag-wavers—it croons and purrs, too.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—In the lobby, people come and go talking of the Forty-fourth Street Chowder and Marching Club, which used to meet here, and of Lerner and Loewe, who knocked out "My Fair Lady" here, and of **MARGARET WHITING,** a no-business-like-show-business gal, who casts her wide voice to the four corners of the Oak Room Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen. She's a cheerful, expansive, life-affirming kind of singer, and you should be prepared to be uplifted. Dining.



Rosemary Clooney

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A big, soigné cabaret on the edge of Chelsea, in the heart of the fur and fashion-student districts. This is where **PEGGY LEE** glides through "See See Rider" and tells a story about a former chauffeur named Morgan, who tried to make a U-turn on the freeway. Her shows are at nine and eleven Feb. 14-18. **YMA SUMAC,** the exotic Peruvian singer with the box-office-size lungs, begins an extended visit on Feb. 21. At six-thirty Wednesdays through Saturdays, **JOHN WALLOWITCH,** a dapper, bespectacled gent, sings his celebrated number about a transvestite ("Bruce") and other songs satirical and sentimental.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—On the back wall of this jazz club there's a neon version of the Manhattan skyline, with a crescent moon and two stars attendant upon it—one of the best examples of inert-gas folk art we know of. The Brazilian percussion-and-vocal team of **AIRTO** and **FLORA PURIM** will be around Feb. 14-19. **HERBIE HANCOCK,** who sometimes takes a break from his electronic funk projects to play spidery, impressionistic jazz piano, comes in with a trio on Feb. 20. Music from nine. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Music for many kinds of people, including unreconstructed folkies, rock-and-roll fundamentalists, Village bopcats, and C. & W. fans. **HENRY BUTLER,** a New Orleans-born jazz pianist who thunders and flashes in the McCoy Tyner mode, brings in a trio on Feb. 15. **SUN RA,** the septuagenarian pianist and bandleader who travels the world decked out in a shaman's flowing robes and kooky hats, will be here on Feb. 16 with his faithful big band, which is being billed as the Disney Odyssey Arkestra. (Last year, Ra and his men did a rendition of "Pink Elephants on Parade" for an album of Disney tunes produced by Hal Willner.) On Feb. 18, **CHRISTINE LAVIN, DAVID MASSENGILL,** and others assemble here to prove that folk music is alive and still in the hands of right-thinkers. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at eight and eleven, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-thirty and eleven-thirty. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A crowded, duskily lit neighborhood bar, where pianists, bassists, and, occasionally, horn players compete for your ear with professional conversationalists. Truth and beauty usually prevail. Pianist **KIRK LIGHTSEY** and a partner will be on duty through Feb. 18. Feb. 19 belongs to trumpeter **DANNY MOORE'S** trio. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel spa known as the Café Carlyle is the winter home of **GEORGE SHEARING,** the London-born pianist famous for his cool, feathery touch and his puns and the jaunty way he sings "You're the Pits" (an upside-down version of the Cole Porter hymn) and the dry way he does "I Went to a Marvellous Party." Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at ten and midnight.

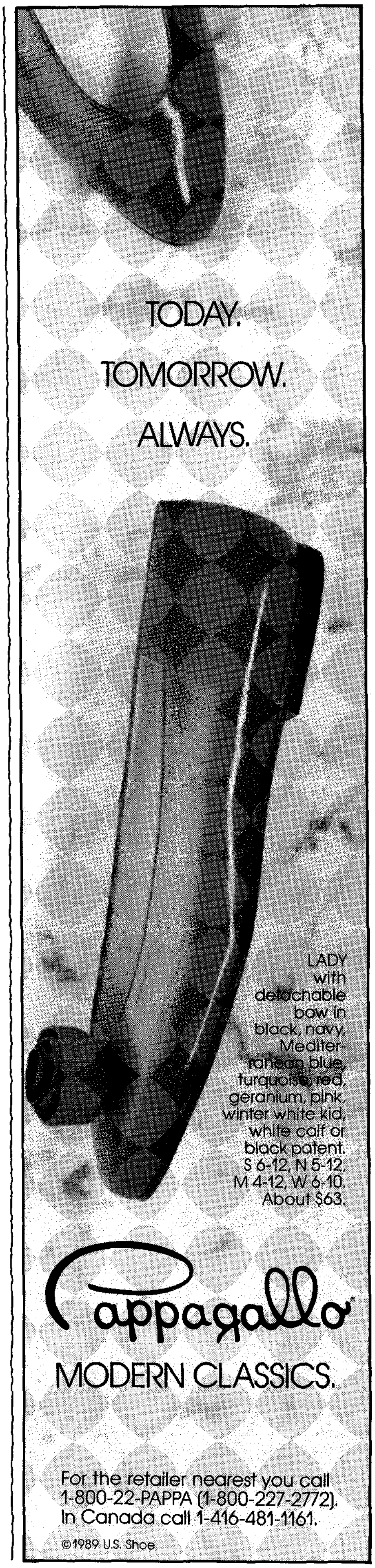
Delta 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A long, rambling bar and restaurant with a white-trash-chicken-shack theme. The decorator went kind of hog-wild with all the old filling-station and soft-drink signs and the collection of hubcaps and the dime-store portrait of the King and the display of dozer caps and the obituary of Bear Bryant from the U. of Alabama *Crimson White*—but it's a friendly enough place. There's live music—country, rock, blues, gospel—every night of the week. Music after nine. Chicken-fried steak, deep-fried crawdads, and other exotic fare.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St., at Ninth Ave. (924-0275)—An Irish bar, way out on the Western edge of town, where the great potholed boulevards turn to cobblestones, and the world across the Hudson flashes its come-hither signs. The back room has Hibernian sounds and native string-band music on weekends. The **COUNTRY GENTLEMEN,** who have been travelling the bluegrass circuit for over thirty years, make a rare visit to Gotham on Feb. 17. Sets at nine and eleven.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through a heavy-duty steel door, through a green Plexiglas door, down a long, narrow, fun-house passageway (mirrors in which you can watch yourself multiply; corrugated-metal siding you can riffle), and down a flight of stairs, you'll find this velvet-and-mirror-walled *boîte*. **GEORGE COLEMAN,** a chesty, hard-blowing Memphis-born tenor saxophonist, leads a quartet Feb. 14-19; **STANLEY TURRENTINE,** a tenor man whose style is all blue smoke and lounge mellowness, brings in a group on Feb. 21. Mondays are set aside for guitarist **LES PAUL,** who was known as Rhubarb Red back in the twenties and thirties, when he was an itinerant country picker. Music from eight. Dining.

Fortune Garden Pavilion, 209 E. 49th St. (753-0101)—Two things not known to be available in the next world—Chinese food and American jazz—can be found here, under a greenhouse roof giving onto a patch of midtown sky. The piano, a Steinway that sits grandly in the middle of the room, is in the hands of **CAROL BRITTO** Feb. 14-19. She'll be accompanied by bassist **GARY MAZZAROPPI** and trumpeter **WARREN VACHÉ, JR.** Music from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, from eight Fridays and Saturdays, and from seven on Sundays.

Indigo Blues, 221 W. 46th St. (221-0033)—A new jazz club, in the basement of the Hotel Edison. It's awash in blue neon, and has a fancy sound system and a shiny dance floor. Miles Davis played here, and his aura



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lingers; a waitress can tell you where he sat when he wasn't tooting his horn. Kirk Whalum, a young pop-jazz tenor saxophonist, is here with his group Feb. 14-19. Mondays have been turned over to a big band run by pianist **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI**. Music after nine.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor retreat (attained by passing through a downstairs restaurant) that features avant-garde jazz, advanced and unadvanced rock, and miscellaneous weird sounds. It has a slapped-together, homemade look, and, judging by the S.R.O. crowds, it is a thriving enterprise. The schedule: Mondays, the **ORDINAIRES**; Feb. 14, Chunk, a percussion-and-electronics group; Feb. 17, a rock-noise-funk band featuring the guitars of **ARTO LINDSAY, VERNON REID,** and **MELVIN GIBBS**; and Feb. 18, Ornette Coleman sidekick **JAMAALADEEN TACUMA**. Music after nine.

LONE STAR CAFÉ, 61 Fifth Ave., at 13th St. (242-1664)—Texas-like in significant respects, though not in the open-spaces-and-clear-sight-lines department, in which it is New York-like. The chief attractions are (on Feb. 16) a Cajun band led by an accordionist and singer named **WAYNE TOUPS** and (on Feb. 18) Texas blues singer and guitarist **JOHNNY COPELAND**. Music after nine. Dining.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—The midtown branch of the aforementioned honky-tonk. It has more space than the parent joint; it also has more mirrors, more fireplaces (two, on the second floor), more carpeting, more Gibson electric guitars serving as wall ornaments, and at least as many souvenir T-shirts and ball caps. The lineup: Feb. 14, **RICK DANKO**; Feb. 16, blues saxophonist **A. C. REED** and His Sparkplugs; Feb. 17, **JOHN MAYALL**; and Feb. 18, **DEFUNKT**. Music after nine. Dining.

RAINBOW ROOM, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—This great ballroom-in-the-sky, after being shut for a couple of years, has been restored to its stately and beautiful Art Deco self. (The original chandelier, hung from a peach-and-pale-blue ceiling, is back, and the dance floor, a replica of the old one, is revolving once more—at its nineteen-thirties half a mile an hour.) The non-stop music is by the Rainbow Room orchestra, a streamlined society band featuring a graceful, velvet-toned trumpeter named Joe Cabot, and by Mauricio Smith and Friends, a rocketing Latin band. Music from seven-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, from eight Fridays and Saturdays, and from six on Sundays. Dining. Closed Mondays. . . . **RAINBOW & STARS** (632-5000): A new, glossy, multilevel maroon-and-silver cabaret, seating about ninety, and located on the north side of the sixty-fifth floor, in what used to be a cocktail lounge. The performers, working in a shallow well in the center of the room, do unwitting battle with the bejewelled backdrop of Central Park, Lenox Avenue, the G. W. Bridge, and points north. **ROSEMARY CLOONEY** sings at nine and eleven Tuesdays through Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

SPO-DEE-O-DEE, 565 W. 23rd St., at Eleventh Ave. (206-1990)—A curious mixture of swank and down-home. (The name comes from the 1949 Stick McGhee song "Drinking Wine, Spo-dee-o-dee," a piece of rowdiness which was Atlantic Records' first hit.) The food is barbecued ribs and such, the music is mostly R. & B., and the furnishings include ballroom-size chandeliers, king-size sofas, and green velvet drapes sprinkled with stardust. **SAMMY PRICE,** a blues and boogie-woogie pianist who was born in Honey Grove, Texas, eighty years ago, will be here on Feb. 16. Price started out as a Charleston dancer, touring with Alphonso Trent's territory band, and after passing through Kansas City made his way to New York in 1938, where he began a long stint as Decca Records' house pianist. Since then, he has worked in New York clubs, played in a Broadway pit band, run a company called Down Home Meat Products, worked as an undertaker, and recorded with Henry (Red) Allen, Doc Cheatham, and others.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—**JOHN SCOFIELD,** a thirty-seven-year-old guitarist who is best known for his work with late-period Miles Davis and whose own playing is marked by a certain Milesian cool, leads a trio in this Village meetinghouse Feb. 14-19. The **MONDAY NIGHT ORCHESTRA,** a band once piloted by Gil Evans and now under the direction of his son, trumpeter Miles Evans, holds forth Feb. 13 and 20. Shows from ten. Dining.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22			

CEILING SHOW

The Phantom hasn't got the only stagestruck chandelier on Broadway. If they're sold out at the Majestic, head for Howard Johnson's at 46th Street to dine on fried clams and watch the restaurant's chandelier put on a show of rhythmic shakes, rattles, and rolls. The moving force isn't earth tremors, nearby building construction, or a passing I.R.T. train. It's the energetic dancers from the Gaiety Male Burlesk Theatre upstairs; their stage sits directly above the first chandelier from the door. Ceiling showtimes weekdays at 1:15, 3:30, 6, 8:30, and 10:30 P.M.*; weekend marathons at 6:15, 9:15, and 12:15.*

VILLAGE GATE, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—In the basement room, the veteran Chicago bluesman **OTIS RUSH** gives the lowdown on his aches and pains at nine and eleven Feb. 17-19. Monday-night salsa sessions resume on Feb. 20.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—One of the few places below the surface of New York that deserve landmark status. It's also one of the few places anywhere that have a notable (if that's the right word) light fixture—one that Charles Mingus K.O.'d while trying to reason with the proprietor, and that the proprietor, a preservationist as well as a businessman, decided to leave in Mingus-ized condition. **ILLINOIS JACQUET,** the frisky Swing Age tenor man, is here with his big band Feb. 14-19; **MAX ROACH,** a formidable modern drummer who once collaborated with Mingus and Duke Ellington on an odd little trio recording entitled "Money Jungle," arrives with a quartet on Feb. 21. Music after ten.

ZANZIBAR & GRILL, 550 Third Ave., at 36th St. (779-0606)—Outside, the jungle that is New York throbs in its old heavy-handed way; inside, the ceiling fans turn slowly, the palm trees susurrate tropically, the jukebox plays Xavier Cugat and the Mills Brothers, and the customer entertains the usual fevered thoughts about going South, where he can do a little shelling and shuffleboarding. There are jazz people on the premises nightly from about nine. They include saxophonist **C. SHARP** (with a trio) on Mondays; pianist **JOHN BUNCH** on Feb. 14; singer-pianist Al Bundy Feb. 17-18; and guitarist **TAL FARLOW** Feb. 21-22.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

MARS is the newest club in town. It features less than charming doormen, a coat-check line longer than a Sunday-morning checkout at Zabar's, bottlenecked staircases connecting five floors of do-it-yourself décor girded by a sound system that can remove even the most stubborn plaque, at a location—Tenth Avenue and 13th Street—that would kill your mother if she knew where you were. In other words, Mars can't miss.

Something strange happens to New Yorkers' priorities when we want to stay out late. All the revered buzzwords—convenience, economy, comfort, parking—are ignored. We don't want a club centrally located near Rockefeller Center; under a bridge, on the tenth floor of a warehouse, or in the basement of a law firm—that's more like it. We want the illusion of iniquity. Mars is hot, dank, close; the second-floor bathroom is the most comfortable place to sit. It cost over a million dollars to achieve this effect.

You'd walk out of the only Korean deli for blocks if they charged for a six-pack what Mars wants for two Heinekens. Why endure this? Because the music is unequivocally magnificent. Because in a city where stepping onto a D train at rush hour can cause more stress than a childproof bottlecap, Mars and its galaxy offer the release one can't achieve on that train without getting arrested.

Clubs in New York play havoc with the rules of power. First, there is cachet in finding out about a club before your friends—though one must be quick, as no place stays a secret longer than two nights—or in knowing when to go: the Copacabana on the last Thursday of every month, never the World on a Tuesday if you're straight, and never any club only a half hour after it opens. Finally, getting in has been known to humble even the august among the Fortune 500. During daylight hours, all decry the system of selectivity that goes on across those velvet ropes, but during moonrise there is no one who walks right in without the frisson of an evil grin.

ART

THE Museum of Modern Art's Andy Warhol retrospective is on view through May 2nd. One must see it, to see just how "empty" this ineffable genius was. We know that Warhol was a hydra-headed phenomenon in his lifetime. We also know that he has remained one in what is shaping up to be a bustling afterlife as well. What hasn't been said often enough, or clearly enough, is that he was an artist of brilliance. No genre was foreign to him, with the possible exception of landscape, which didn't interest him much in art or in reality. But he met the challenges of social and iconic portraiture, of political subjects and history painting, of academic, erotic, and even religious themes head on, in a manner that continues to seem breathtakingly, sometimes excruciatingly modern. Ironically, perhaps, this puts him in a league with the great figures in the art of the last century—with Degas and Manet especially. His "Electric Chairs" and "Disaster Paintings" have the instant, actuarial poetry of Manet's "Execution of the Emperor Maximilian." Where Manet, however, is often said to have failed at religious subject matter, Warhol surely did not. His great grisaille silk-screened painting of birth in a big-city Catholic hospital, for instance, is a masterpiece, and it is an Annunciation.

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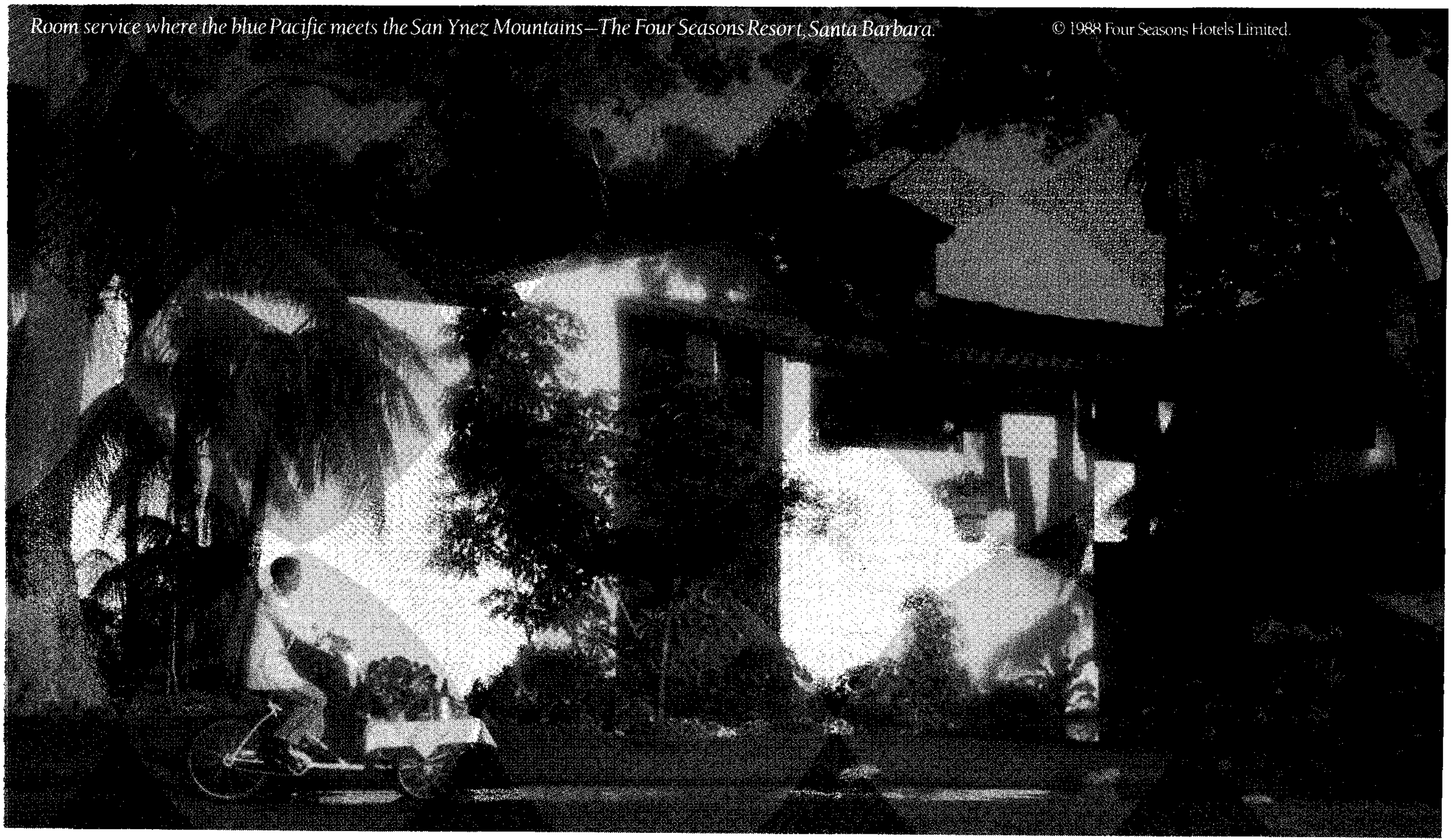

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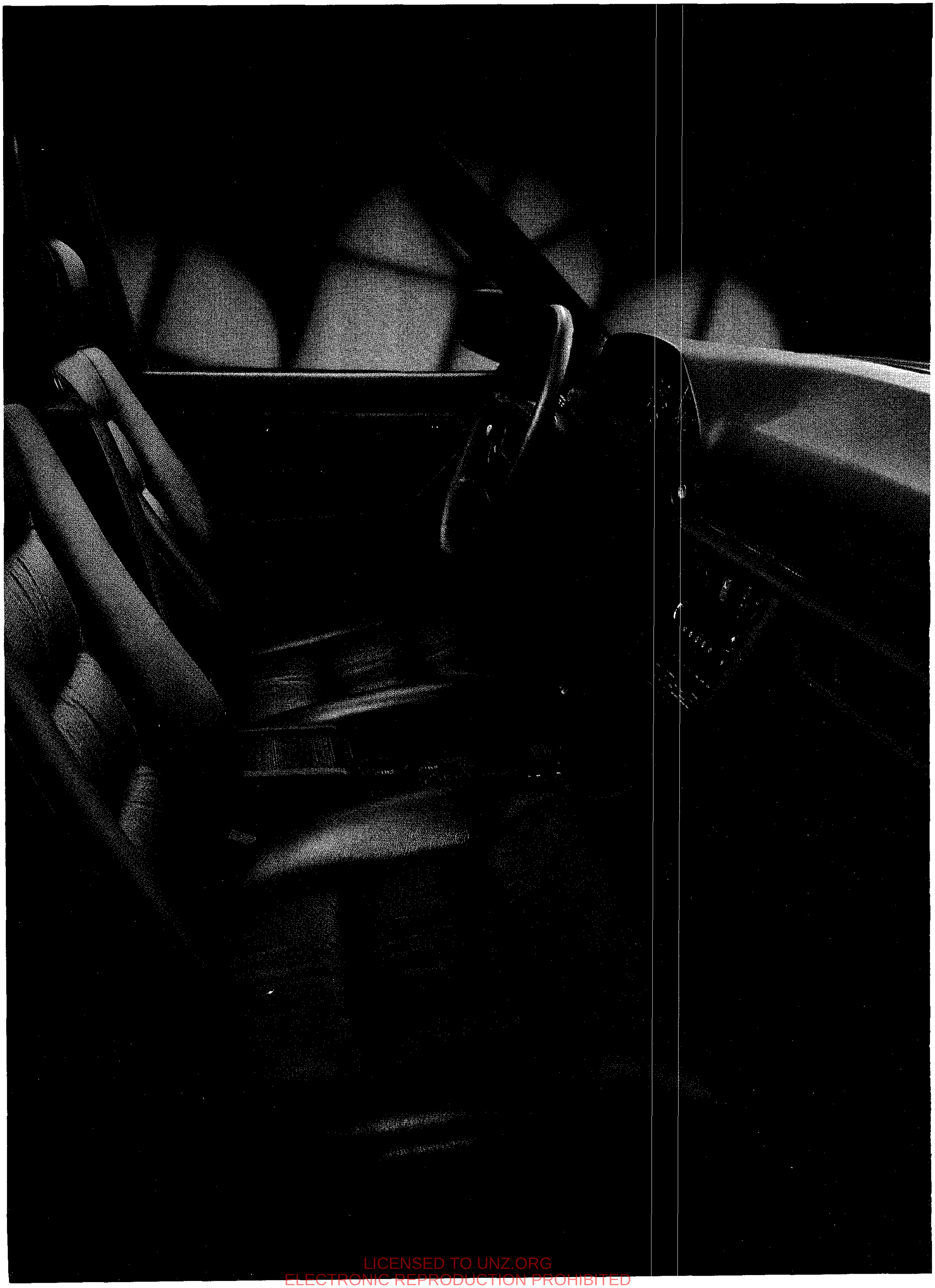

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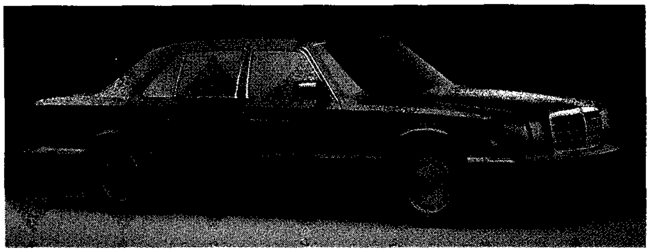

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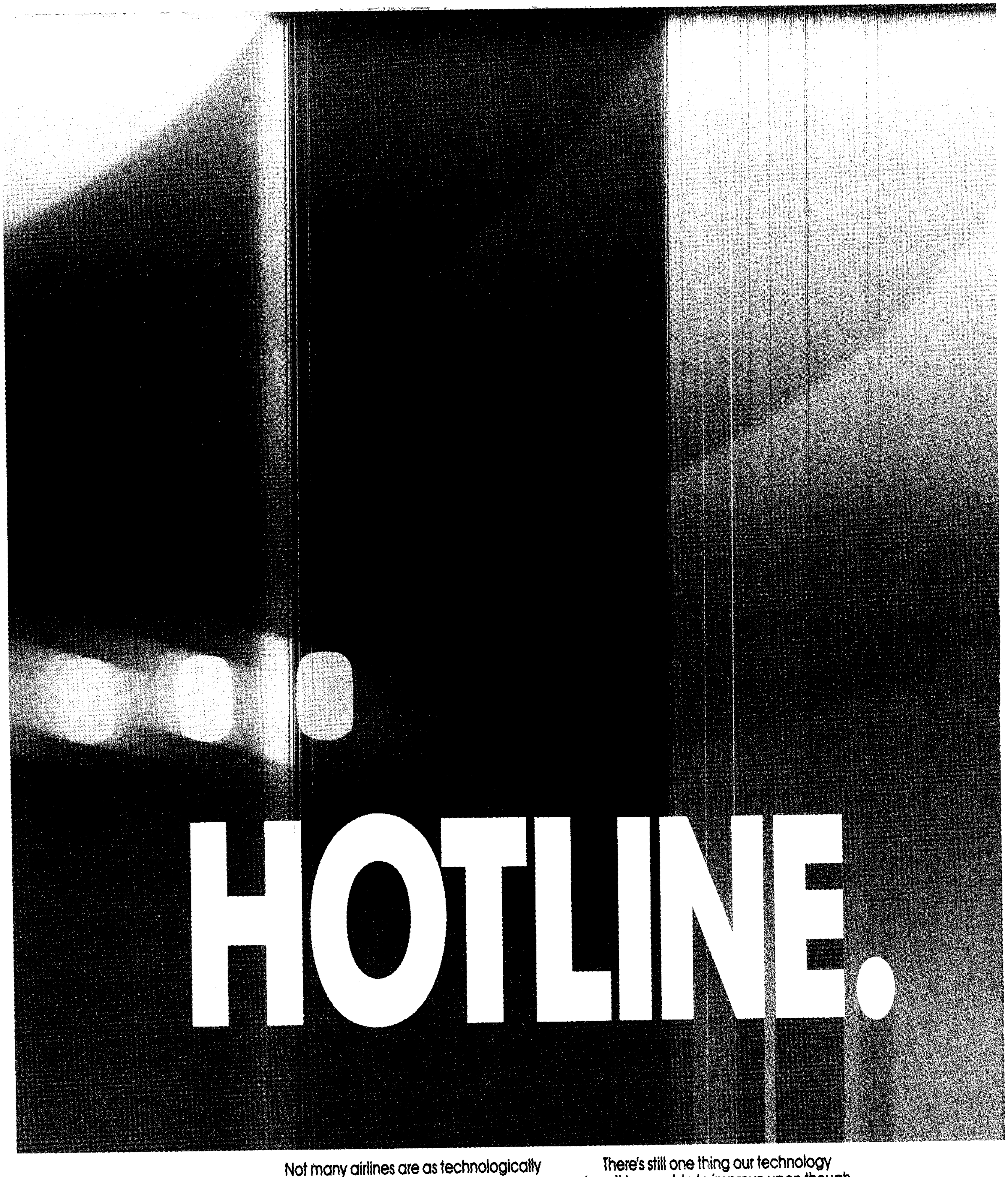

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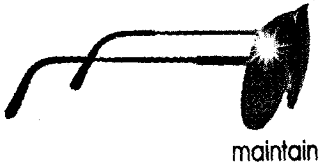
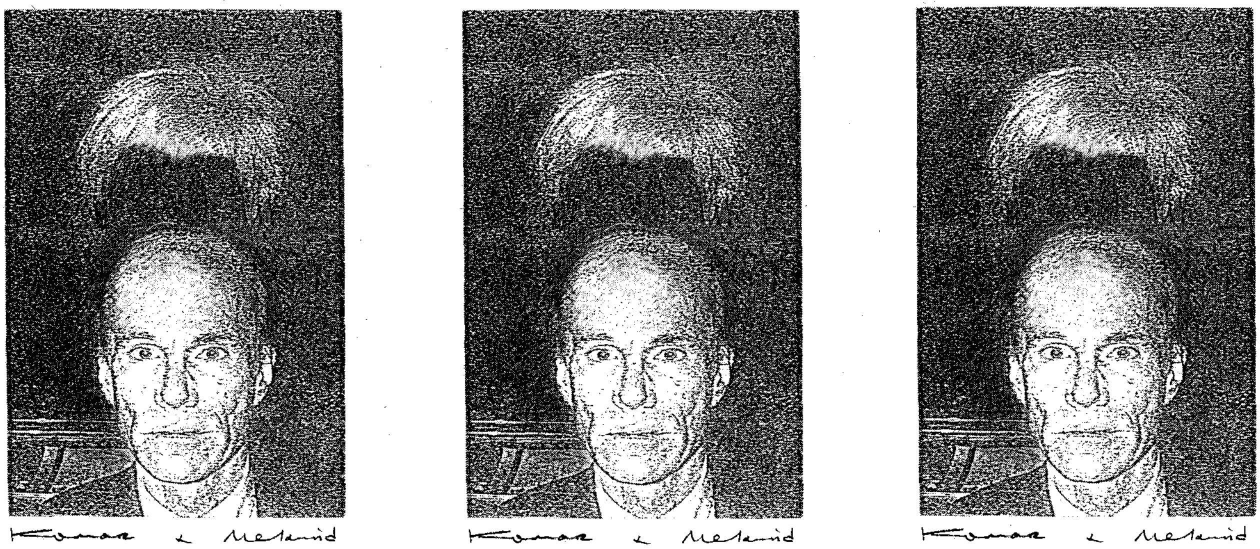


GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



Andy Warhol

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—All the Ingres works in the collection (ten paintings, twenty-two drawings, and seven prints) have been put on view together. The Met's holdings tend to reflect this great neoclassical artist's most conservative side. Exceptions include the portrait of the "Princesse de Broglie" (1851) and one small sheet of reclining male nudes. Through March 19. . . . ¶ A show of Sienese Renaissance paintings and manuscript illuminations, including sets of narrative panel paintings which were split up long ago. Among the reunited works are six panels from the Sassetta altarpiece commissioned by the wool merchants' guild. Through March 19. . . . ¶ Photographs from William Henry Fox Talbot's "Pencil of Nature." (See Photography, below.) Through April 9. . . . ¶ The Costume Institute is exhibiting eighty-five outfits from the Victorian era. Through April 16. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—The Andy Warhol retrospective. (A listing of the films in the exhibition can be found in Film Libraries, below.) . . . ¶ Walker Evans' works. (See Photography.) Through April 11. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—German figure painting of the past three decades is surveyed in a top-to-bottom (of the museum) show that includes inverted figures by Baselitz, calligraphic figures by Penck, and spectral figures by Christa Näher. Works by forty-one artists are on display. Through April 23. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 11 to 7:45, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 4:45.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—For all his inventiveness and creativity, his Viennese charm and cultured friends (such as Duchamp and Breton), Frederick Kiesler somehow kept himself from achieving what those less talented have achieved: since his death in 1965 he has remained relatively obscure. This eye-opening retrospective is a chance to examine freshly the breadth of invention that came from this innovator, including documentation of his influential theatre sets, a reconstruction of the much reproduced Surrealist room in Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery, his biomorphic furniture, and studies for Endless House, for a grotto in the shape of a fish, and for a house in the shape of a tooth. Through April 16. A complementary show is at Jason McCoy, 19 E. 71st St. . . . ¶ An exhibition of objects made by Yoko Ono in the sixties is in the lobby gallery. Concurrently, films and videos by Ms. Ono will be on view on the second floor (see Film Libraries, below, for schedule). Through April 16. . . . ¶ A show of American folk art from the center in Williamsburg, Virginia, that is named for Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. The landmark collection, started in the twenties, identified and brought to public attention such painters (all represented here) as Ammi Phillips, Erastus Salisbury Field, and John Brewster, Jr. Also, carvings, furniture, textiles, and pottery. Through April 2. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—A display of lacquerware from China, Japan, Korea, Burma, Thailand, and Iran is the main reason for a visit just now. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—Finland's greatest natural resource—wood—is also a major source of inspiration for its artists, as this show from Helsinki's Museum of Applied Arts points out. Through April 23. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays, 10 to 8, no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—An exhibit examining the ways in which artists have found inspiration in the golem legend. Through April 2. (Open daily except Fridays and Saturdays. Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, noon to 5; Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—A show of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drawings from Haarlem's Teyler Museum focusses attention on the contrasting purposes of Northern and Southern European draftsmanship. Through April 30. (Open daily except Mondays. Hours: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—Twenty-three collage paintings by Benny Andrews, dating from the fifties through the seventies, selected by Donald Kuspit. Andrews is a powerfully expressive, formally resourceful artist, who is both well established and often overlooked. His work makes us think of Alberto Giacometti, George Grosz, Ben Shahn, George Bellows, Marc Chagall, and R. B. Kitaj without ever seeming derivative. Through Feb. 26. (Open daily except Mondays and Tuesdays. Hours: Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

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GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Joseph Cornell (1903-72)—As some of the works in this show of collages indicate, Cornell was capable of slipping into ordinariness when he strayed from the enclosed, protected world of his magical boxes. Best are collages that use simple framing devices, like grids and arches, and different kinds of containers, like teapots and a bell jar. Through Feb. 28. (Mathes, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Jasper Johns—Of the images for which Johns is primarily known, the maps remain the most elusive. The dealer Larry Gagosian has opened his new luxe space dramatically with this immaculate historical view of all but one of Johns' map paintings. Through March 25. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.)

Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965)—If the retrospective at the Whitney has simply whetted your appetite, here are some bold charcoal drawings for interior lighting, surface treatments, and space divisions in Endless House. Through Feb. 25. (McCoy, 19 E. 71st St.) . . . ¶ Want more? "Around Frederick Kiesler" offers a small sampling of works by lesser-known artists and architects who worked in Vienna in the twenties, as he did. Through Feb. 24. (Austrian Institute, 11 E. 52nd St. Closed Saturdays.)

Le Corbusier (1887-1965)—This unusual exhibition of works on paper spans forty years, reminding us that the exemplary modern architect was a rather wonderful modern artist as well. He could draw as voluptuously as Léger and as subtly as Klee. Through Feb. 25. (Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St.)

Joan Miró (1893-1983)—A pleasant, informal assortment of drawings, paintings, sculptures, and ceramics by this master of austere whimsy. You might also check the rear gallery: when we were there we saw two little paintings by Raoul Dufy whose colors made us feel as if we were on holiday. Through March 25. (Perls, 1016 Madison Ave., at 78th St.)

Thérèse Oulton—Recent abstract paintings by this thirty-five-year-old English artist. Oulton's work is formally ambitious, technically formidable, obsessive, and murky—some say Wagnerian. Through Feb. 18. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

Theodore Roszak (1907-81) / **Clarence H. Carter**—Roszak, who was best known as a sculptor, did not have a light touch. These sixty-odd paintings and drawings from the thirties show the influence of Cubism and Futurism.

ART—Cont'd

They are richly colored, densely composed, and terribly static. / Clarence Holbrook Carter grew up in an area of the Ohio River Valley that was both rural and industrial, and perhaps because of this his paintings seem both straightforwardly wholesome and perversely surreal—his later work suggests an American Magritte. This interesting show addresses his early years. Through Feb. 25. (Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St.)

Frank Stella—These painted reliefs, part of the "Waves" series, are marvels of stylized vitality, with each piece seeming to burst out of its tondo-shaped frame and strike a pose. Andy Warhol's printer tones are a possible influence on Stella's new colors, which are looking more modulated and acid than before. Through March 2. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Also, new prints at Castelli Graphics, 578 Broadway, until Feb. 25.)

Short List—**JEAN HÉLION:** Through April 1. (Rachel Adler, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.) . . . **DOROTHEA TANNING:** Through Feb. 28. (Schlesinger, 822 Madison Ave., at 69th St.) . . . **ESTEBAN VICENTE:** Through March 4. (Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St.) . . . **GREGORY WILLIAMS:** Through Feb. 25. (Cordier & Ekstrom, 417 E. 75th St.)

GALLERIES—57th STREET AREA

Janet Fish—New paintings. Bright, appealing, ingenious, and extremely accomplished traditional still-lifes, outdoor scenes, and portraits of children. Through Feb. 25. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Sam Francis—A strong, fresh-looking show of recent paintings by the master of neo-rococo splatter. Lots of green, lots of white, and three tondos. Through Feb. 25. (Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St.)

Jerry Kearns—Recent paintings with movie- and record-biz titles, such as "To Have and Have Not" and "Earth Angel." Easy, obvious political sentiment in the form of slick, Pop-ish art. Through March 4. (Kent, 41 E. 57th St.)

Hermann Nitsch—Paintings, works on paper, and objects relating to a series of ritualistic theatre performances the artist staged in Vienna in the sixties. Through March 11. (Luhring Augustine, 41 E. 57th St.)

Sean Scully—Of all the painters following in the painterly tradition of Jasper Johns, Scully is one who does it extremely well. Even those who have lost faith in abstraction may find it hard not to enjoy some moments before these accomplished flaglike paintings. Through Feb. 25. (McKee, 41 E. 57th St.)

Sidney Janis 40th Anniversary Exhibition—It is a pleasure to encounter a self-congratulatory display that is truly deserved. This exquisite installation of works by Mondrian, Léger, Giacometti, and Arp pays tribute to the master art dealer Sidney Janis, who exhibited each of them in decades past. Through March 11. (110 W. 57th St.)

Group Show—"The Way They Saw It," politically inspired paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Philip Evergood, Antonio Frasconi, Ben Shahn, and others. Through Feb. 25. (Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St.)

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Short List—**LEONARD BASKIN:** Through Feb. 25. (Kennedy, 40 W. 57th St.) . . . **MAX BECKMANN:** Through Feb. 25. (Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.) . . . **BEN BERNS:** Through Feb. 25. (Schmidt-Bingham, 41 W. 57th St.) . . . **ISABEL BISHOP:** Through March 31. (Midtown, 11 E. 57th St.) . . . ¶ Through March 4. (Cole, 200 W. 57th St.) . . . **RONALD BLADEN:** Through March 12. (Washburn, 41 E. 57th St.) . . . **JORGE CASTILLO / RED GROOMS:** Through March 8. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St.) . . . **ROBERT CRONIN:** Through March 4. (Gimpel, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.) . . . **MARY FRANK:** Through Feb. 18. (Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.) . . . **HAROLD GREGOR:** Through Feb. 23. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.) . . . **ALUN LEACH-JONES:** Through Feb. 18. (Ross, 50 W. 57th St.) . . . **ROBERT LOBE:** Through March 4. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St., and 80 Greene St.) . . . **LOUISA MATTHIASDOTTIR:** Through March 8. (Schoelkopf, 50 W. 57th St.) . . . **ROBERT MOTHERWELL:** Through March 4. (Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St.) . . . **NIELE TORONI:** Through March 4. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St.)

GALLERIES—SoHo

Richard Artschwager—A major show of sculptures and reliefs—made of Formica, acrylic, Celotex, and rubberized hair—by this spectacular craftsman. Eating out is the leitmotiv here, as art imitates life-size banquettes. Some settings—"Two Half Dinners," for instance—are seen from an aerial perspective. Others suggest only food for thought. Artschwager's is a peculiar vision and this is one of his best shows ever. Through Feb. 25. (Castelli, 420 West Broadway.)

Bruno Ceccobelli—Every art center has its own brand of provincial painting that thrives at home but doesn't travel well. New York's is a kind of painterly, geometrically derived abstraction. These abstract interpretations of religious icons and altars by a second-wave Italian painter must be Rome's. Through Feb. 25. (Shainman, 560 Broadway.)

Carroll Dunham—Works on rag board and paper. The influence of Twombly becomes discernible in the scribbled-on white backgrounds of Dunham's big new paintings. Each has for its central subject a big, gloopy, vaguely elephantine shape in a magical shade of pink, yellow, orange, or purple. The drawings are similar, but smaller and less goofy. Through Feb. 25. (Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway.)

Robert Garratt—Much painting suffers from preciousness, but these works, which are made with layer upon layer of colored glazes, are precious with a purpose. The narrative linkage between them seems a bit forced, but the dark portrayals of buildings, the phases of the moon, abstract painting, and Frankenstein and his bride provide a pleasant escape from the usual assortment of trendies. Through Feb. 25. (Koury Wingate, 578 Broadway.)

Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzel—A technically impeccable mixed-medium installation titled "Ecclesia," composed of three separate pieces. Each evokes the occult or alchemical; two offer very fetching optical illusions. This talented pair is in some danger of becoming a sophisticated magic act for kids. Through March 4. (Brandt, 568 Broadway.)

Thomas Kovachevich—Large, somewhat whimsical curved-wood veneers scattered about the Cadot gallery's walls and floors look like shavings from a Claes Oldenburg pencil—but, alas, without the pencil. Through Feb. 28. (470 Broome St.)

Jannis Kounellis and Mario Merz—These two major figures of the Arte Povera movement are shown to best advantage here—especially Kounellis, who is represented by a fine early painting on paper (from 1961) and two of his more recent wall sculptures (from the eighties). Makes one hungry for more. Through Feb. 25. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Thomas Lawson—Acrylic paintings on plywood, and mixed-medium works. Lawson's themes are heroic and classical—e.g. "Magnanimity in Triumph" or "Vice Under Virtue's Heel"—but his public-sculpture images have all in one way or another been debased. Michelangelo's "David" turns out to be a monument at Forest Lawn. Through Feb. 18. (Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St.)

David Lynch—Dark-gray oily-looking oil paintings with wicked little figures and cutout letters that spell things like "Can Billy come out to play." Also, small, beautiful gray watercolors with sadistic-looking scratched surfaces. This is all *very* aesthetic and hip-suburban, suggestive of movie classics such as "The Bad Seed" or the artist's own "Blue Velvet." Through Feb. 25. (Castelli, 578 Broadway.)

Ella Bergmann-Michel (1896-1971) **and Robert Michel** (1897-1983)—A handsome show of works on paper, mostly from the twenties, by a husband and wife who always worked and exhibited together. They were often eclipsed by their contemporaries at the Weimar Academy of Fine Arts (later known as the Bauhaus) and by friends such as Kurt Schwitters and Adolf Meyer. New light reveals her style to be sketchier and more expressive, his more cerebral and architectural, but both achieved a fusion of Dada and Constructivist styles. Through Feb. 25. (Esman, 70 Greene St.)

Robert Morgan—Recent modular paintings, photographs of altered art-book reproductions, and conceptual word pieces make up "The Icon and the Text," the artist's first solo show since 1977. It all seems frightfully rational, but fails to make much sense. Through March 1. (Nerlino, 96 Greene St.)

Antonio Muntadas—Be sure to look at "The Board Room." Around a slick modern conference table this Spanish artist has hung formal portraits of thirteen charismatic religious leaders, from Jimmy Swaggart and Pat Robertson to the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and Ayatollah Khomeini. Each leader's mouth has been replaced with a small video monitor continuously broadcasting his television sermons or news stories about his religious power. Muntadas reduces their words to gibberish with the simultaneous preaching, and in his gentle way projects this dramatic altar into a Babel-like other world. Through Feb. 18. (Gallery Moos, 133 Greene St.)

Saul Ostrow—Take one part Lower East Side-style graffiti stencils (greedy men clutching houses and moneybags); blend it into a late-eighties mucky and streaked painted field; add passages of red, white, and black geometric painting; prop small shelves to the side, Italian style, with powerful epoxy casts on them—and, presto! You, too, can be in this moment's vanguard. Through Feb. 25. (McDonald, 560 Broadway.)

A. R. Penck—Look past the O.K. bronze totems to the bravura paintings they shield. By combining primal or primitivistic emblems (like Africanate warrior masks) with modern narrative images (armed soldiers and tanks), this central figure in German painting deftly rides the precarious edge between the expressive and the symbolic. Through Feb. 25. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Jeff Perrone—These junky decorative ceramics resembling wacky teapots were made by an incisive art critic, and contain all the tricks of the once-dominant pattern painting yet none of its hard-earned lessons. Through Feb. 25. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

Jeff Pullen—Kitschy constructions incorporating, among other things, fake wood panelling and street signs. Through March 4. (Dorsky, 578 Broadway.)

David Rabinowitch—The windows, door, and walls of Barbara Flynn's new European-style gallery were designed to accommodate the sculpture on view. The result is a tall, beautiful, volumetric, minimal echo chamber with five large minimal sets of concentric rings carved directly into the plaster walls by the veteran minimalist David Rabinowitch. Through April 29. (Flynn, 113 Crosby St.)

Maura Sheehan—Over the years, Sheehan has quietly presented some of New York's more provocative installation works, recycling materials like damaged automobile windshields and painting them with imagery from Greek vases, or developing her own classically inspired funerary sculpture. Her newest installation, called "Surface-Tension," consists of two volleyball nets forming an X, with a large white sphere on the floor at the point of intersection. A concealed tape recording emits a not unpleasant high-pitched ring. The tension between art history and urban experience, which has always been Sheehan's strength, is, unfortunately, not even on the

TO THE RESCUE

What would you call a woman who can rescue a scarred but favorite skirt from involuntary retirement? The Yellow Pages has her listed under Weavers, but don't be fooled. Alice Zotta is a sorceress. High in an unobtrusive limestone-and-brick tower on West 45th Street, this busy lady with Tiffany-window-thick glasses steadfastly works her magic, making holes, rips, tears, and burns eerily disappear. So remarkable is her sleight of hand that beneficiaries uniformly stare at their garments, unable to recall which sleeve needed repair, which knee formerly resembled shredded wheat. To each awestruck query of "How did you do this?" she simply replies, "Not everyone can," offers an angelic little smile, and takes cash.

Elliott Erwitt

surface here, nor has it yet been replaced with an equally compelling set of concerns. Through Feb. 25. (Facchetti, 476 Broadway.)

Robert Stackhouse—Walking between the two parts of this evocative slat sculpture is pleasant enough, but the real pleasures here are huge watercolors of cobras and Viking ships, which add dimension to the sculpture. Through March 4. (Dolan Maxwell, 154 Wooster St.)

Cy Twombly—Twelve paintings, one drawing, and two painted wood sculptures, all from 1951 and 1953, some from the collection of Robert Rauschenberg. This is very restrained, assured work for a young artist, but then composure has always been Twombly's cardinal sign. The paint used is house paint, and the sculptures are especially guileless. Through March 18. (Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St.)

Emilio Vedova—The first solo exhibition in New York for this important Italian artist (who turns seventy this year) includes paintings from 1982 to 1988. Most are very large and tondo-shaped. Several are freestanding and painted on both sides in the artist's usual expressionistic grisaille. Vedova likes his work to be theatre. Through March 4. (Ala, 560 Broadway.)

Short List—**JAMES BIEDERMAN:** Through Feb. 25. (Weber, 142 Greene St.) . . . **HANS BREDER:** Through March 1. (Schreiber-Cutler, 171 Spring St.) . . . **LOUISA CHASE:** Through March 11. (Alexander, 59 Wooster St.) . . . **ROBERT COLESCOTT:** Through March 9. (Kind, 136 Greene St.) . . . **GLORIA FRIEDMANN:** Through March 4. (Marcus, 578 Broadway.) . . . **MARILYN LERNER:** Through March 4. (Good, 532 Broadway.) . . . **DENNIS OPPENHEIM:** Through March 11. (Plumb, 81 Greene St.) . . . **STEPHEN PACE:** Through Feb. 28. (Perlow, 560 Broadway.) . . . **CLIFFTON PEACOCK:** Through March 7. (Germans van Eck, 420 West Broadway.) . . . **MICHELANGELO PISTOLETTO:** Through March 4. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.) . . . **MARIANNE STIKAS:** Through March 4. (Davis, 568 Broadway.) . . . **ERNEST T.:** Through March 9. (Brown, 560 Broadway.) . . . **DAVID WOJNAROWICZ:** Through March 4. (P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway.)

OTHER GALLERIES

Ouattara—New paintings. Through March 11. (Baghoomian, 611 Broadway.)

P.S. 1—A remarkable show of "Secret Pictures" by Hilma af Klint (1862-1944), a Swedish artist and mystic. Until 1905, Klint was an extrovert who painted portraits and landscapes. When she discovered the theosophical teachings of H. P. Blavatsky, she began to produce these strange, luminous, and often very beautiful abstractions, on loan from Stockholm. . . . ¶ Also, "Theatergarden Bestiarium," a confused and pretentious exhibition of scale models and installations by thirteen European and American artists on the theme, possibly, of the ways art could be exhibited in the future. Through March 12. (46-01 21st St., Long Island City. Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

Group Shows—At the **ALTERNATIVE MUSEUM,** 17 White St.: "Prisoners of Image, 1800-1988" is a hodgepodge of vintage racist broadsides and recent art works, in various mediums, on the themes of ethnic and gender stereotypes. Martha Rosler's half-hour videotape "The Strange Case of Baby M" is outstanding. . . . ¶ Also (Matrix Gallery), a vague but theatrical "sculptural environment" by Ritsuko Taho. Through March 4. . . . **80 WASHINGTON SQUARE EAST GALLERIES,** New York University: The annual small-works exhibition, juried by Allan Frumkin. Through March 3. (Open Tuesday evenings until 7.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

THIS year is a big one for photography: it's having its hundred-and-fiftieth birthday. Pictures are coming out of the woodwork, there will be histories galore, and at many museums paintings will have to relinquish some space for the retrospectives. You can feel the revving-up in the photography community. There's nothing like a party to bring everyone together—or to remind them why they stayed apart.

Ever since photography was invented, the medium has been fragmented by people's need to categorize it, starting with the argument about whether it is art or something smaller, bigger, or totally different. The debate goes on. And everyone's right. That's what made photography so exciting in the first place—its capacity to do and to be so many things. You can see and sense this excitement in a little show currently at the Metropolitan, of William Henry Fox Talbot's "Pencil of Nature," the first book ever to include photographs, made by one of the medium's two inventors.

There's something Biblical about the Met's show. Photography has the same beginning as Genesis: it, too, begins with light. But here there's a person in the role of creator—Fox Talbot, who takes us along as he describes what he has done "with the agency of light alone." As you read and look, you have no doubt that a new way of seeing the world is unfolding.

Elliott Erwitt—A retrospective that is welcome and overdue. Erwitt's photographs are very smart, without making a fuss of themselves. He makes the work look so easy that it's been taken for granted, or written off as just sight gags. But Erwitt is successfully juggling many elements, any one of which, in someone else's hands, would probably land with a plop. And the work's not all funny, although this is an exhibition where you hear people laughing. Through March 12. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Walker Evans (1903-75)—Looking at Evans' work is always a pleasure. However, this exhibition feels like an extra pleasure—a homecoming. It includes most of the images in "American Photographs," the 1938 MOMA Evans publication that has now been reissued by the museum. Evans' "Torn Movie Poster" and his photographs of signs resonate with the work of his downstairs neighbor at the museum, Andy Warhol. (Museum of Modern Art.)

Josef Koudelka—Nothing Koudelka does should be sneezed at. But although his photographs have an intelligence and a way of catching and creating moods, they're lifeless. People and views come off as still-lifes. Here are his signature Gypsies, as well as more recent pictures—panoramas—which appear burdened by an ambition to be heavyweights. Through March 4. (Pace-MacGill, 11 E. 57th St.)

Kathryn Marx—A lot of visuals and no vision makes for a hollow experience. That emptiness pervades Marx's arrangements of strips

Liza Minnelli

. . . Listens to

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

PHOTOGRAPHY—*Cont'd*

of Kodak color photographs, mostly showing fragments of people and of architecture. It all looks like weak David Hockney. Through Feb. 25. (Neikrug, 224 E. 68th St. Fridays and Saturdays, 1 to 6.)

Brian Oglesbee—Studio-tableau photographs. Through March 4. (Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St. Opens at noon on Saturdays.)

MUSIC

THE night of February 20th brings one of those only-in-New York choices for the opera lover. At the Metropolitan, a new production of "Salome" is unveiled, directed by Nikolaus Lehnhoff, conducted by Marek Janowski, and starring Eva Marton. Across the plaza, at Avery Fisher Hall, Daniel Barenboim, whose appointments and dismissals have been so much in the news recently, leads the Orchestre de Paris in Act II of "Tristan und Isolde," with Gary Lakes and Hildegard Behrens. At Carnegie Hall will be the thunder and fury of the young Verdi's "Nabucco," conducted by Riccardo Muti and featuring Giorgio Zancanaro and Linda Roark-Strummer in the main parts.

Personal taste will make a choice self-evident for some. For those who find all three events irresistible, this help: "Salome" is repeated at intervals through March 22nd, and "Nabucco" is available in Maestro Muti's Philadelphia home base on the 14th and 17th of February (the latter a matinée performance). Some tastes, though, will reject all three. "Salome" and "Tristan" have always been recognized as in some sense morally dangerous, unwholesomely seductive operas, while "Nabucco" is not just noisy but violent and repulsive: "Unending raging, bloodshedding, reviling, striking, and murdering," said the composer Otto Nicolai, to whom Verdi was "a pitiable, contemptible composer." One could stay home; one could venture to Alice Tully Hall, where, with the Jupiter Symphony, the brilliant and not yet famous clarinettist Charles Neidich will play a rarity, Spohr's Concerto No. 2 for that instrument.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall 362-1911; for Avery Fisher Hall 874-2424; for Carnegie Hall 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 415-5440. Other box-office numbers are included in the listings.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**"IDOMENEO,"** with Dawn Upshaw, Carol Vaness, Frederica von Stade, and Siegfried Jerusalem; conducted by David Stivender. (Feb. 13 and Feb. 17 at 8.) . . . With Marvis Martin, Carol Vaness, Frederica von Stade, and Siegfried Jerusalem; David Stivender. (Feb. 22 at 8.) . . . **"LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR,"** with Mariella Devia, Luis Lima, Gino Quilico, and Gwynne Howell; Edoardo Müller. (Feb. 14 at 8 and Feb. 18 at 1:30.) . . . **"DON CARLO,"** with Aprile Millo, Tatiana Troyanos, Ermanno Mauro, and Brian Schexnayder; James Levine. (Feb. 15 at 7.) . . . With Margaret Price, Tatiana Troyanos, Ermanno Mauro, and Brian Schexnayder; James Levine. (Feb. 18 at 7:30.) . . . **"BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE,"** with Jessye Norman and Samuel Ramey; and **"ERWARTUNG,"** with Jessye Norman; James Levine conducting both. (Feb. 16 and Feb. 21 at 8. The Feb. 21 principals will be Jessye Norman, Michael Devlin, and Richard Woitach.) . . . **"SALOME,"** the new production. With Eva Marton, Helga Dernesch, Richard Cassilly, Neil Rosenshein, and Bernd Weikl; Marek Janowski. (Feb. 20 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 14 at 7:30: Leonard Slatkin conducting, with Mark Peskanov, violin. . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 8, Feb. 17 at 2, and Feb. 18 at 8: Leonard Slatkin conducting a Rossini-Haydn-Bernstein program. With vocal soloists. . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 8: Kurt Masur conducting a program in which Claudio Arrau will play Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto.

Orchestre de Paris—Daniel Barenboim conducting. At Carnegie Hall, Feb. 16 at 8: With the orchestra's chorus and vocal soloists in Berlioz' "Damnation of Faust." . . . Feb. 18 at 8: A Mozart-Stravinksy program, with Mr. Barenboim at the piano. . . . ¶ At Avery Fisher Hall, Feb. 17 at 8: Again with the chorus, this time performing Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis." . . . Feb. 20 at 8: The second act of "Tristan und Isolde"; a concert version.

"Meet the Moderns"—Lukas Foss conducting the Brooklyn Philharmonic in a program of works by Latin-American composers. With Frank Morelli, bassoon, and Rosario Granda directing the Coro Hispanico. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Feb. 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 622-1000.)

American Symphony Orchestra—George Stenhammer, winner of the 1989 Leopold Stokowski Conducting Competition, will lead the orchestra in a program of music by Bernstein, Tchaikovsky, and Wilhelm Stenhammer. Leonidas Kavakos, winner of the 1988 Naumburg Violin Competition, will be a soloist. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 19 at 3.)

Philadelphia Orchestra—Riccardo Muti conducting a concert version of "Nabucco"; with the Westminster Choir and soloists. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 20 at 8.)

Orpheus—With Arleen Augér, soprano, performing arias by Haydn. Also on the program are a Haydn symphony, a Britten symphony, and variations by Ginastera. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 15 at 8.)

Philharmonia Virtuosi—Richard Kapp conducting music by Tchaikovsky, William Bolcom, and Dvořák. With Mr. Bolcom, piano, and Joan Morris, mezzo-soprano. (Triplex, 199 Chambers St. 618-1980. Feb. 17 at 8. . . . ¶ Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Feb. 21 at 8.)

"Israel in Egypt"—Performed by the English Baroque Soloists and the Monteverdi Choir; directed by John Eliot Gardiner. (Avery Fisher Hall. Feb. 19 at 3.)

Benefit Concert—Placido Domingo, Mirella Freni, Aprile Millo, Samuel Ramey, Mstislav Rostropovich, members of the American Symphony Orchestra, and others in a concert to help victims of the Armenian earthquake. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 21 at 8.)

RECITALS

Maria Joao Pires—Piano, in her New York recital début. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 14 at 8.)

Gilbert Kalish—Piano. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 14 at 8.)

Albert Fuller—Harpsichord, with the Helicon Ensemble, a group of twenty-one musicians who combine in different ways to form chamber ensembles. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Feb. 15-17 at 8, and Feb. 18 at 8:30.)

Rolf Schulte—Violin. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 16 at 8.)

"Schubertiade"—At the 92nd Street Y. The second year in a ten-year-long series devoted to the chronological rendering of Schubert's works. Feb. 16 at 8: Arleen Augér, soprano; David Gordon, tenor; Hermann Prey, baritone; and Leonard Hokanson, piano. . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 8: Andrea Matthews, soprano; Mr. Prey; Malcolm Bilson, fortepiano; the Tokyo String Quartet; and the Concert Chorale of New York, directed by Amy Kaiser. The program consists of a string quartet, waltzes, and lieder. . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 3: Mary Ann Hart, mezzo-soprano; Mr. Prey; Kevin McMillan, baritone; the Concert Chorale of New York, directed by Amy Kaiser; and others performing more lieder and choruses. . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 8: Faith Esham, soprano; John Aler, tenor; Mr. Prey; William Sharp, baritone; Claude Frank, piano; David Jolley, horn; and others. . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 8: Ms. Matthews; Mr. Aler; Leslie Guinn, bass-baritone; and Bruno Weil conducting the New York Chamber Symphony and the Concert Chorale of New York.

Musicians' Accord—In a program devoted to twentieth-century American composers. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 16 at 8.)

Composers Concordance—Presenting performances of works by, among others, Patrick Hardish, Wendy Chambers, Louis Karchin, and Beth Anderson. With Rolf Schulte, violin, and others. (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Feb. 17 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

John O'Conor—The first in a series of eight concerts devoted to the complete Beethoven piano sonatas. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 18 at 8.)

Emerson String Quartet—In a Prokofiev-Haydn-Brahms program. (Alice Tully Hall. Feb. 19 at 3.)

Mirella Freni—Soprano. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 19 at 8.)

Speculum Musicae—Contemporary chamber music. (Merkin Concert Hall. Feb. 21 at 8.)

Guild of Composers—Presenting works by Ursula Mamlok, Elliott Carter, Artur Schnabel, and others. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Feb. 21 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

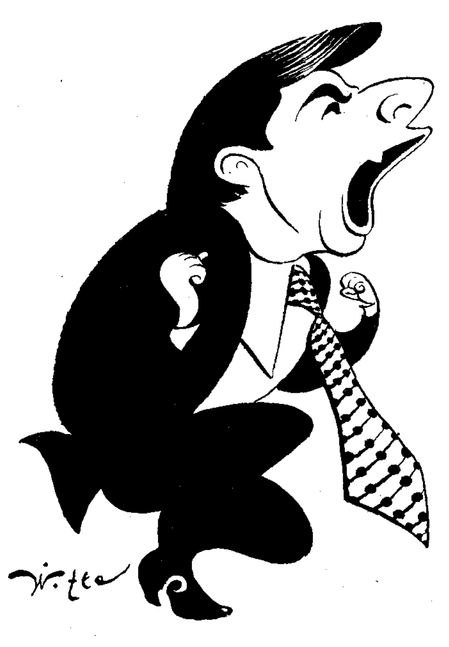
Eugene Istomin—Piano. (Carnegie Hall. Feb. 22 at 8.)

JAZZ / ROCK / POP / PERSONAL APPEARANCES

American Jazz Orchestra—A classic-jazz repertory ensemble, re-creating the blue tones and transcendent rhythms of Count Basie's band. John Lewis, whose spare style is descended from Basie's, conducts from the piano. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Feb. 14 at 8. For ticket information, call 353-4195.)

Les Misérables Brass Band—A Valentine's Day dance concert for the hitched, the unhitched, and the derailed, featuring the group from Robert Wilson's "Knee Plays." Expect to swing from Ellington to Hendrix and back again. (Alternative Museum, 17 White St. 966-4444. Feb. 14 at 8.)

Neil Diamond—A flashy show from one of the hardest-working men in show business. His recent HBO special showcased him in fine form, singing in a rich, gravelly voice, with an acoustic guitar slung over his shoulder. His familiar material—songs that have buoyed the careers of bands from the Hollies to UB40—is a curious mixture of Vegas schmalz ("You Don't Bring Me Flowers")



Rick Pitino

and pop gems ("I'm a Believer"). He's an overdramatic performer, but on gospel-tinged numbers, like "Brother Love's Travelling Salvation Show," he'll raise the roof. (Byrne Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Feb. 16-18 at 8. . . . ¶ Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 587-9222. Feb. 22-24 at 8.)

"ROCK AGAINST FUR"—It's another benefit night in New York City—this time sponsored by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. The B-52's are hosting, and they will doubtless exhort any mink-minded people living in their own "private Idaho" to "get out of that state." Also on hand is Lene Lovich, who sometimes yodels oddball lyrics over synthesized Slavic dance rhythms; Belinda Carlisle and Jane Wiedlin, formerly of the Go-Go's; and other sympathizers whose hearts (and purchasing power) are in the right place. (Palladium, 126 E. 14th St. Feb. 18 at 7:30. For tickets, call 399-4444.)

GERI ALLEN—Solo piano. The other night at St. Clement's, she played a free-jazz piece inspired by the history of jazz piano, with sections dedicated to Eubie Blake, Thelonius Monk, Mary Lou Williams, and Cecil Taylor. At this performance, she will very likely invoke some of the same influences. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Feb. 18 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

AFRICAN HERITAGE CONCERT—The No Name Gospel Singers, Los Pleneros de la 21, Papa Susso, and Thokoza. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Feb. 17 at 8.)

RHYS CHATHAM—The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Feb. 16-18 at 8:30.

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

RANGERS—Tony Granato and Brian Leetch continue their bilateral bid for Rookie of the Year. . . . ¶ Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, Feb. 17 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Devils, Feb. 20 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Feb. 22 at 7:30.

ISLANDERS—Vs. the St. Louis Blues, Feb. 16 at 8:05. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Feb. 18 at 5:05. . . . ¶ Vs. the Detroit Red Wings, Feb. 21 at 8:05.

DEVILS—Vs. the Toronto Maple Leafs, Feb. 13. . . . ¶ Vs. the Buffalo Sabres, Feb. 15. (Game time: 7:45.)

KNICKS—Rick Pitino's first-rate coaching keeps the guys in fine shape, the team in first place, and the box office boffo. . . . ¶ Vs. the Nets, Feb. 18. . . . ¶ Vs. the Houston Rockets, Feb. 21. (Game time: 7:30.)

NETS—Vs. the Atlanta Hawks, Feb. 15. . . . ¶ Vs. the Miami Heat, Feb. 20. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Clippers, Feb. 23. (Game time: 7:30.)

(Home base for the Rangers and the Knicks is Madison Square Garden, 563-8300; for the Islanders, the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 587-9222; and for the Devils and the Nets, the Byrne Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

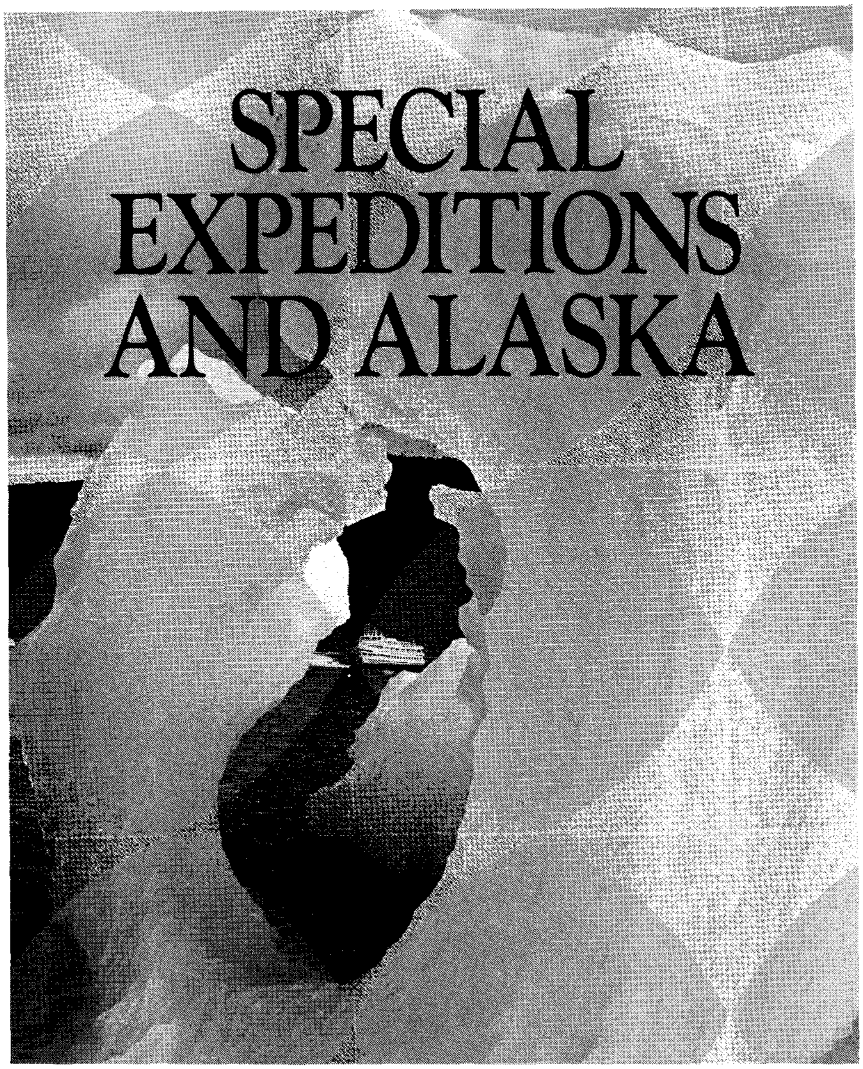
HORSES—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 12:30. . . . ¶ Trotting at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8. . . . At Meadowlands: Nightly at 7:30.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

WESTMINSTER KENNEL CLUB DOG SHOW—More than twenty-six hundred contestants preening and pointing, and vying for Top Dog in every category imaginable, save Swimsuit. At this year's show you'll find, among others, ninety poodles, twenty-five Rhodesian Ridgebacks, and thirty-seven Portuguese water dogs. (Madison Square Garden. 563-8300. Feb. 13-14, starting at 8:30 A.M.)

THE COWGIRL HALL OF FAME—Of course you've been to Hereford, Texas, and seen it. If not, the owners of Tortilla Flats, Gulf Goast, and Sugar Reef have brought it here in the form of an under-the-stars-style barbecue joint. The restaurant will honor a different cowgirl every four months by dishing up her hometown favorites and shining those old roping trophies. Patsy Montana—who sold a million copies of "I Wanna Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" in 1936—is first up. (519 Hudson St. Opens Feb. 20.)

PROSE READINGS—Margaret Atwood hosting a program of stories by Canadian authors; Louis Zorich, Joanna Gleason, and Maria Tucci will read. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 15 at 6:30.)



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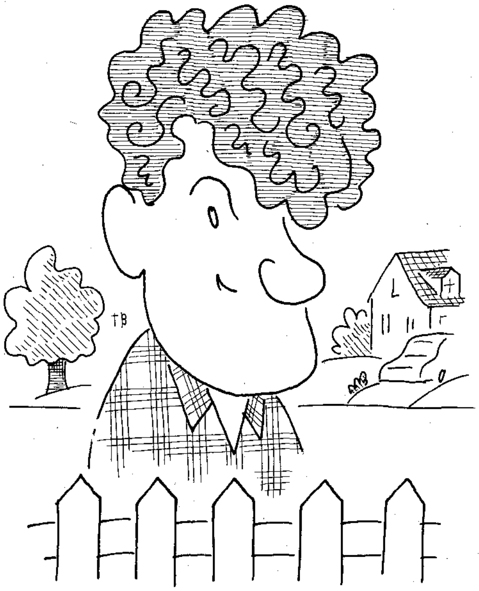
FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 22.



Tom Hanks

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Feb. 14-15: "Mata Hari" (1932; directed by George Fitzmaurice), with Greta Garbo, Ramon Novarro, and Lionel Barrymore; and "The Painted Veil" (1934; Richard Boleslavsky), with Greta Garbo, Herbert Marshall, and George Brent.
Feb. 16-17: "Grand Hotel" (1932; Edmund Goulding), with Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Joan Crawford, and Wallace Beery; and "As You Desire Me" (1932; George Fitzmaurice), with Greta Garbo and Melvyn Douglas.
Feb. 18: "The Singing Detective" (Jon Amiel), with Michael Gambon. The seven-hour British television series, shown complete at one sitting, with an intermission.
Feb. 19: "Anna Karenina" (1935; Clarence Brown), with Greta Garbo, Fredric March, and Basil Rathbone; and "Two-Faced Woman" (1941; George Cukor), with Greta Garbo, Melvyn Douglas, Ruth Gordon, and Constance Bennett.
From Feb. 21: "Palermo or Wolfsburg" (1980; Werner Schroeter; in German and Italian).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Tap" (†).
Theatre 2: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Feb. 16: "Her Alibi" (Bruce Beresford), with Tom Selleck. From Feb. 17 (tentative): "Bird" (Clint Eastwood), with Forest Whitaker.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Beaches" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
Through Feb. 16: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†).
From Feb. 17: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Murray Hill, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
"The Accidental Tourist" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Cousins" (Joel Schumacher), with Ted Danson and Isabella Rossellini.
Theatre 2: "Mississippi Burning" (†).
Theatre 3: "Rain Man" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Working Girl" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through Feb. 16: "Kinjite" (J. Lee Thompson), with Charles Bronson.
From Feb. 17: "Who's Harry Crumb?" (Paul Flaherty), with John Candy.

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
"Three Fugitives" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Her Alibi" (Bruce Beresford), with Tom Selleck.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
Through Feb. 16: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†).
From Feb. 17: "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure" (Stephen Herek), with Keanu Reeves.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.
Theatre 2: "The Fly II."

D. W. Griffith, 235 E. 59th. (759-4630)
Through Feb. 16: "The Naked Gun" (†).
From Feb. 17: "Gleaming the Cube" (Graeme Clifford), with Christian Slater and Steven Bauer.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 16: "Twins" (†). From Feb. 17: "Working Girl" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Feb. 16: "Working Girl" (†). From Feb. 17: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Beaches" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).
Theatre 3: "Tango Bar" (†).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 16: "Who's Harry Crumb?" (Paul Flaherty), with John Candy. From Feb. 17: "Rachel River" (Sandy Smolan), with Pamela Reed, Craig T. Nelson, and James Olson.
Theatre 2: "Tap" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
Through Feb. 16: "Talk Radio" (Oliver Stone), with Eric Bogosian.
From Feb. 17: "True Believer" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Cousins" (Joel Schumacher), with Ted Danson and Isabella Rossellini.
Theatre 2: "Rain Man" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Mississippi Burning" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
Through Feb. 16: "Who's Harry Crumb?" (Paul Flaherty), with John Candy.
From Feb. 17: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Loews Orpheum I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)
Theatre 1: "Tap" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Three Fugitives" (†).
Theatre 2: "Her Alibi" (Bruce Beresford), with Tom Selleck.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum I, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)
"Zou Zou" (†) and "Princess Tam Tam" (†).

Bleecker St. Cinema I and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)
Theatre 1: "Outrageous Animation," twenty-two animated films from twelve countries; and "Virgin Machine" (Monika Treut; in German), with Ina Blum.
Theatre 2: "Wings of Desire" ("Der Himmel über Berlin"; Wim Wenders; in German), with Bruno Ganz, Otto Sander, and Solveig Dommartin.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Working Girl" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Feb. 16: "Talk Radio" (Oliver Stone), with Eric Bogosian. From Feb. 17: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 16: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†). From Feb. 17: "True Believer" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Salaam Bombay!" (Mira Nair; in Hindi).
Theatre 2: "Parents" (Bob Balaban), with Randy Quaid, Mary Beth Hurt, and Sandy Dennis.
Theatre 3: "Three Fugitives" (†).
Theatre 4: "Matador" (Pedro Almodóvar; in Spanish), with Antonio Banderas, Assumpta Serna, and Nacho Martínez; and "Law of Desire" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Working Girl" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Feb. 16: "Torch Song Trilogy" (Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, and Brian Kerwin. From Feb. 17: "True Believer" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Feb. 16: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas. From Feb. 17: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Beaches" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Lawrence of Arabia" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"The Unbearable Lightness of Being" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Through Feb. 16: "Torch Song Trilogy" (Paul Bogart), with Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein, and Brian Kerwin.
From Feb. 17: "Paperhouse" (Bernard Rose), with Charlotte Burke, Ben Cross, and Glenne Headly.

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
Through Feb. 21: "We Think the World of You" (Colin Gregg), with Alan Bates and Gary Oldman.
From Feb. 22: "The Luckiest Man in the World" (Frank D. Gilroy), with Philip Bosco.

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)
"The Dressmaker" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
Through Feb. 16: "The Last Temptation of Christ" (Martin Scorsese), with Willem Dafoe.
From Feb. 17: "Talk Radio" (Oliver Stone), with Eric Bogosian.

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Rain Man" (†).

Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Pelle the Conqueror" (†).
Theatre 2: "Voices of Sarafina!" (Nigel Noble), a documentary.
Theatre 3: "36 Fillette" (Catherine Breillat; in French).

Cinema Studio I and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).
Theatre 2: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Working Girl" (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Tap" (†).
Theatre 2: "Three Fugitives" (†).
Theatre 3: "Mississippi Burning" (†).
Theatre 4: "Cousins" (Joel Schumacher), with Ted Danson and Isabella Rossellini.
Theatre 5: "The Accidental Tourist" (†).
Theatre 6: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: Through Feb. 16: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Far-

gas. From Feb. 17: "Gleaming the Cube" (Graeme Clifford), with Christian Slater and Steven Bauer.

Theatre 2: Through Feb. 16: "Madame Sousatzka" (John Schlesinger), with Shirley MacLaine. From Feb. 17: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: Through Feb. 16: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†). From Feb. 17: "True Believer" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "Dangerous Liaisons" (†).

Theatre 2: "Kinjite" (directed by J. Lee Thompson), with Charles Bronson.

Theatre 3: Through Feb. 16: "Who's Harry Crumb?" (Paul Flaherty), with John Candy. From Feb. 17: "Gleaming the Cube" (Graeme Clifford), with Christian Slater and Steven Bauer.

Theatre 4: "Working Girl" (†).

Theatre 5: Through Feb. 16: "Her Alibi" (Bruce Beresford), with Tom Selleck. From Feb. 17: "Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure" (Stephen Herek), with Keanu Reeves.

Theatre 6: "Tap" (†).

Embassy I, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)

"Three Fugitives" (†).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 2: Through Feb. 14: "Beaches" (†). From Feb. 15: "Cousins" (Joel Schumacher), with Ted Danson and Isabella Rossellini.

Theatre 3: Through Feb. 16: "The Naked Gun" (†). From Feb. 17: "The Accused" (Jonathan Kaplan), with Kelly McGillis and Jodie Foster.

Theatre 4: Through Feb. 14: "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (†). From Feb. 15: "Beaches" (†).

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)

Through Feb. 16: "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka" (Keenen Ivory Wayans), with Wayans, Bernie Casey, and Antonio Fargas.

From Feb. 17: "The Mighty Quinn" (Carl Schenkel), with Denzel Washington and Robert Townsend.

Movieland, B'way at 47th. (757-8320)

Through Feb. 16: "Parents" (Bob Balaban), with Randy Quaid, Mary Beth Hurt, and Sandy Dennis.

From Feb. 17: "True Believer" (†).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "The Fly II" (Chris Walas), with Eric Stoltz.

Theatre 2: Through Feb. 16: "The Fly II." From Feb. 17: "The 'Burbs" (Joe Dante), with Tom Hanks, Carrie Fisher, and Bruce Dern.

Warner, 7th Ave. between 42nd and 43rd. (764-6760)

"Mississippi Burning" (†).

West Side Cinema I and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)

Theatre 1: "Twins" (†).

Theatre 2: "Party Line."

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)

Feb. 13: To be announced.

Feb. 14-15: "Crossfire" (1947; directed by Edward Dmytryk), with Robert Young, Robert Ryan, and Robert Mitchum; and "Berlin Express" (1948; Jacques Tourneur), with Merle Oberon and Robert Ryan.

Feb. 16: "The Body Snatcher" (1945; Robert Wise), with Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi; and "Cat People" (1942; Jacques Tourneur), with Simone Simon, Kent Smith, and Tom Conway.

Feb. 17-18: "Captain Blood" (1935; Michael Curtiz), with Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, and Basil Rathbone; and "King Kong" (1932; Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack), with Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong, and Bruce Cabot.

Feb. 19-21: "Casablanca" (1942; Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and Claude Rains; and "To Have and Have Not" (1944; Howard Hawks), with Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, and Walter Brennan.

From Feb. 22: "Go Into Your Dance" (†); and "Shine On, Harvest Moon" (1944; David Butler), with Ann Sheridan and Dennis Morgan.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)

Through Feb. 14: "The Dead" (1987; John Huston), with Anjelica Huston and Donal McCann; and "The Misfits" (1961; John Huston), with Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, and Montgomery Clift.

Feb. 15-16: "The Bridge on the River Kwai" (1957; David Lean), with William Holden, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins, and Sessue Hayakawa.

Feb. 17-18: "Annie Hall" (1977; Woody Allen), with Allen and Diane Keaton; and "Bananas" (1971; Woody Allen), with Allen.

Feb. 19: "Mon Oncle d'Amérique" (1980; Alain Resnais; in French), with Gérard Depardieu, Nicole Garcia, and Robert-Pierre; and "Last Year at Marienbad" (1961; Alain Resnais; in French), with Delphine Seyrig.

Feb. 20-21: "The Fountainhead" (1949; King Vidor), with Gary Cooper, Patricia Neal, and Raymond Massey; and "The Razor's Edge" (1946 †).

From Feb. 22: "Cat and Mouse" (1978; Claude Lelouch; in French), with Michèle Morgan, Serge Reggiani, and Jean-Pierre Aumont; and "The French Detective" (1979; Pierre Granier-Deferre; in French), with Lino Ventura, Patrick Dewaere, and Victor Lanoux.

Film Forum 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)

"Zou Zou" (†) and "Princess Tam Tam" (†).

Thalia SoHo, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)

Feb. 13: To be announced.

Feb. 14: "Marius" (1931; Alexander Korda) and "Fanny" (1932; Marc Allégret), both in French, with Raimu, Pierre Fresnay, and Orane Démazis.

Feb. 15: "Beat the Devil" (1954; John Huston), with Humphrey Bogart, Jennifer Jones, Gina Lollobrigida, Robert Morley, and Peter Lorre; and "Arsenic and Old Lace" (1944; Frank Capra), with Cary Grant, Priscilla Lane, Raymond Massey, Peter Lorre, Josephine Hull, and Jean Adair.

Feb. 16: "Dead of Winter" (1987; Arthur Penn), with Mary Steenburgen, Roddy McDowall, and Jan Rubeš; and "My Name Is Julia Ross" (1945; Joseph H. Lewis), with Nina Foch, George Macready, and Dame May Whitty.

Feb. 17-18: "Breathless" (1959; Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo; "My Life to Live" (1962; Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Anna Karina; and "A Married Woman" (1965; Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Macha Meril.

Feb. 19: "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret" (1970; Georges Franju; in French); and "Judex" (1963; Georges Franju; in French).

Feb. 20: "Orchestra Wives" (†); and "Happy Landing" (1938; Roy Del Ruth), with Sonja Henie, Don Ameche, Cesar Romero, and Ethel Merman.

Feb. 21: "César" (1936; Marcel Pagnol; in French), with Raimu, Orane Démazis, and Charpin; and "Angèle" (1934; Marcel Pagnol; in French), with Fernandel, Orane Démazis, and Jean Servais.

Feb. 22: "Casablanca" (1942; Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and Claude Rains; and "Passage to Marseille" (1944; Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Michèle Morgan, and Sydney Greenstreet.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)

Feb. 13: To be announced.

Feb. 14: "Cabin in the Sky" (1943; Vincente Minnelli), with Ethel Waters, Eddie Anderson, Lena Horne, Louis Armstrong, and John Bubbles; and "Stormy Weather" (1943; Andrew Stone), with Bill Robinson, Fats Waller, Cab Calloway, and Dooley Wilson.

Feb. 15: "Moonfleet" (1955; Fritz Lang), with Stewart Granger, George Sanders, Joan Greenwood, Viveca Lindfors, and Jon Whiteley; and "The Informer" (1935; John Ford), with Victor McLaglen.

Feb. 16: "Only Angels Have Wings" (1939; Howard Hawks), with Jean Arthur and Cary Grant; and "The Talk of the Town" (†).

Feb. 17-18: "Mr. Arkadin" (†); and "The Stranger" (1946; Orson Welles), with Welles, Edward G. Robinson, and Loretta Young.

Feb. 19: "After the Thin Man" (1936) and "The Thin Man" (1934), both directed by W. S. Van Dyke, with Myrna Loy and William Powell.

Feb. 20: "Le Jour se Lève" ("Daybreak"; 1939; Marcel Carné; in French), with Jean Gabin, Jules Berry, and Arletty; and "Bizarre, Bizarre" (†).

Feb. 21: "Marked Woman" (†) and "Kid Galahad" (†).

Feb. 22: "Les Misérables" (1935; Richard Boleslavsky), with Charles Laughton and Fredric March; and "A Tale of Two Cities" (1935; Jack Conway), with Ronald Colman, Edna May Oliver, and Blanche Yurka.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)

THEATRE I: Feb. 17 at 3: "Carl Th. Dreyer" (1966; directed by Jørgen Roos; in Danish); "They Caught the Ferry" (1948; Dreyer); and "A Castle in a Castle" (1954; Dreyer and Roos). . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 6: "Vampyr" (1931-32; Dreyer; in German), with Julian West. . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 2: "The President" (1918-19; Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 5: "Carl Th. Dreyer," "They Caught the Ferry," and "A Castle in a Castle." Mr. Roos will be present. . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 2: "Leaves from Satan's Book" (1919-21; Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 5: "The Parson's Widow" (1920; Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ Feb. 20 at 2: "Love One Another" (1921-22; Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ Feb. 20 at 5: "Once Upon a Time" (1922; Dreyer; live English voice-over) and "Bride of Glomdale" (1925-26; Dreyer; live English voice-over), both incomplete prints. . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 3: "Michael" (1924; Dreyer; live English voice-over). . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 6: "The Master of the House" (1925; Dreyer; silent). . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 6:30: "The Chelsea Girls" (1966; Andy Warhol).

THEATRE 2: Feb. 13 at 3 and 6:30: "Lilac Time" (1928; George Fitzmaurice; silent), with Colleen Moore, Gary Cooper, and Eugenie Besserer. . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 3 and 6: "Eat" (1963) and "Blow Job" (1963), both by Andy Warhol. . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 3 and 6: "The Drums of Winter" (1988; Sarah Elder and Leonard Kamerling), a documentary. . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 3 and 6: "Henry Geldzahler" (1964; Warhol).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 36th St. at 35th Ave., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)

RIKLIS THEATRE: A program of films photographed by Néstor Almendros. Feb. 15 at 2:30: "The Story of Adèle H." (1975; François Truffaut; in French), with Isabelle Adjani. . . . Feb. 16 at 2:30: "The Green Room" (1977; Truffaut; in French), with Truffaut, Nathalie Baye, and Jean Dasté. . . . Feb. 17 at 2:30: "The Last Metro" (1980; François Truffaut; in French), with Catherine Deneuve, Gérard Depardieu, and Jean Poiret. . . . Feb. 17 at 7:30: "The Cockfighter" (1974; Monte Hellman), with Warren Oates. . . . Feb. 18 at 1: "Kramer vs. Kramer" (1978; Robert Benton), with Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep. . . . Feb. 18 at 4:30: "Still of the Night" (1981; Benton), with Roy Scheider and Meryl Streep. . . . Feb. 18 at 7:30: "Places in the Heart" (1984; Benton), with Sally Field. . . . Feb. 19 at 4: "Pauline at the Beach" (1982; Eric Rohmer; in French). . . . Feb. 22 at 2:30: "Kramer vs. Kramer." . . . ¶ A program of independent and experimental films about New York City. Feb. 18 at 3: "The Dancing Soul of the Walking People" (1974-78; Paula Gladstone). . . . Feb. 19 at 2:30: Seven short films by Marie Menken, Stan Brakhage, and others.

Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Ave., at Second St. (477-2714)—Films showing in either the **JONAS MEKAS THEATRE** or the **MAYA DEREN THEATRE:** Feb. 14 at 6: "Gertrud" (1965; Carl Th. Dreyer; in Danish, no subtitles). . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 8: "The Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man" (1963; Ron Rice), with Taylor Mead and Winifred Bryan. . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 6: "Strike" (1925; Sergei M. Eisenstein; silent). . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 8: "Babo 73" (1964; Robert Downey), with Taylor Mead. . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 7: Three short documentary films by Michelangelo Antonioni; and "Le Amiche" (1955; Antonioni; in Italian, no subtitles). . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 6: "A Kiss for Cinderella" (1925; Herbert Brenon; silent). . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 8: "Potemkin" (1925;

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Eisenstein; silent). . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 8: "Charmed Particles" (1978; Andrew Noren). . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 6: "Plisetskaya Dances" (1965; Vassili Katanyan), a documentary; and five short films about dance. . . . ¶ Feb. 18 at 8:30: "Cleopatra" (1970; Michel Auder), with Viva and Taylor Mead. . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 6: "The Lighted Field" (1987; Noren). . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 8: "Lazybones" (1925; Frank Borzage; silent). . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 6: "October" (1928; Eisenstein; silent). . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 8:30: "Flesh" (1969; Paul Morrissey). . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 6: Short films by Kurt Kren. . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 8: "The Jewish Melody" (1941; Joseph Seiden).

Collective for Living Cinema, 41 White St. (925-2111)—Feb. 13 at 8: "A Woman Is a Woman" (1960; Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina. . . . ¶ Feb. 14 at 8: "The Lusty Men" (1952; Nicholas Ray), with Robert Mitchum, Arthur Kennedy, and Susan Hayward. . . . ¶ Feb. 15 at 8: "Othon" (1969; Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet; in French). . . . ¶ Feb. 16 at 8: "A Walk Through H" (1978) and "Vertical Features Remake" (1979), both by Peter Greenaway. . . . ¶ Feb. 17-18 at 8: Two different programs of video works by Buffalo artists. . . . ¶ Feb. 17-18 at 10:30: Four short animated films by the Brothers Quay. . . . ¶ Feb. 19 at 8: "Goodbye in the Mirror" (1964; Storm de Hirsch). . . . ¶ Feb. 20 at 8: "Vivre Sa Vie" (1962; Godard; in French), with Anna Karina. . . . ¶ Feb. 21 at 8: "In a Lonely Place" (1950; Ray), with Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Grahame. . . . ¶ Feb. 22 at 8: "History Lessons" (1973; Straub and Huillet; in German).

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-3015)—Two films starring Mariko Kaga. Feb. 17 at 6:30: "With Beauty and Sorrow" (1965; Masahiro Shinoda). . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 8:30: "Muddy River" (1981; Kohei Oguri).

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—The film section of "Yoko Ono: Objects, Films" is showing in the Film/Video Gallery, on the second floor. Feb. 14-19: "Fluxfilms" (1966), Tuesday at 1:30 and 5:30, Wednesday through Saturday at noon and 3, and Sunday at 1 and 4. . . . ¶ From Feb. 21: "Two Virgins" (1968) and "Film No. 5 (Smile)" (1968), Tuesday at 1:30, 3:30, and 6:15, and Wednesday at 11:30, 1:30, and 3:30.

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"Twenty Years of Monty Python." Feb. 14 at 12:05, 1:45, 3:30, and 6, a compilation of early work by members of the Python group. . . . Feb. 15 at 12:05, 1:45, and 3:30, "The Pythons," a BBC documentary filmed on the set of "Life of Brian"; and other interviews. . . . Feb. 17 at 12:05, 1:45, 3:30, and 6, two 1973 German television specials on the Pythons. . . . Feb. 18, starting at 12:15, a marathon: Chapters 1 through 22 of "Monty Python's Flying Circus." . . . Feb. 21 at 12:05, 1:45, 3:30, and 5:30, more early work by members of the Python group. . . . Feb. 22 at 12:30 and 2:30, Python work done since 1974.

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—A series of films on Asia made by German filmmakers. Feb. 17 at 3: "Tokyo-Ga" (1983; Wim Wenders), a documentary. . . . ¶ Feb. 17 at 7: "The Chinese Are Coming" (1986; Manfred Stelzer).

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

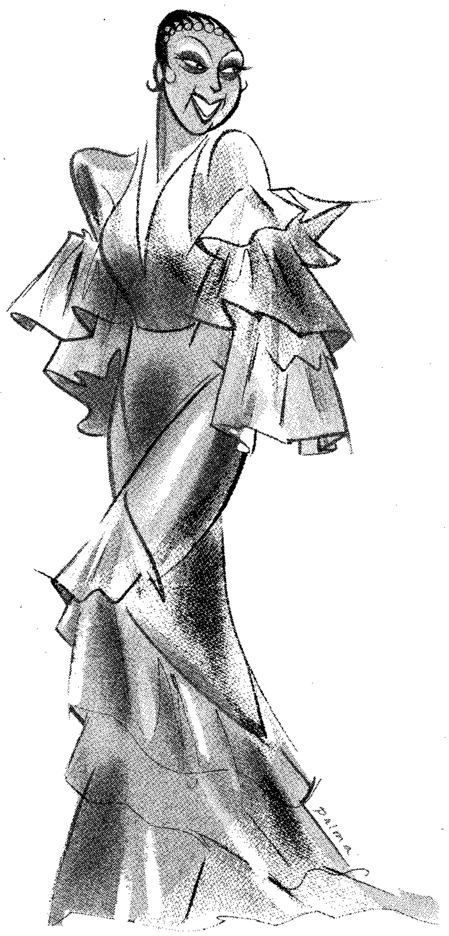
(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Arlene Croce.)

The Accidental Tourist—It begins with the numb grief of a punctilious Baltimore travel writer, Macon Leary (William Hurt), whose twelve-year-old son was senselessly shot. Macon has become such a depressed loner that his wife (Kathleen Turner) leaves him. The movie, directed by Lawrence Kasdan, who wrote the screenplay with Frank Galati, closely follows the 1985 Anne Tyler novel, and it's about Macon's coming to life. A fiercely eager oddball (Geena Davis) who pulls him into her bed turns out to be his salvation. The plot construction is that of a screwball comedy of the thirties: poor working girl has the life force that upper-class prig needs. But people talk a formal, affected English that sounds counterfeit and everyone seems catatonic. The film's minimal fun has to do with the wry, pixillated family humor of Macon and his siblings (Amy Wright, Ed Begley, Jr., and David Ogden Stiers).—P.K. (Reviewed 1/23/89.) (Murray Hill, Cinema II, Art Greenwich Twin, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Beaches—This movie about the lifelong friendship between two women of contrasting backgrounds—Bette Midler as CC Bloom, a showbiz-crazy Jewish redhead from New York, and Barbara Hershey as Hillary Whitney, a repressed wealthy Wasp from San Francisco—suggests the kind of material that Midler might be using for a takeoff. Instead, it's being played for maudlin soulfulness. After a while, it turns into an all-girl "Love Story," with Hillary becoming ghoulishly pale from heart disease and CC (now a singing star) staying at her side. If you admired Midler in "The Rose" and "Down and Out in Beverly Hills," you may want to bash your head against the wall. With Mayim Bialik, who must have been specially created to be CC at eleven, and John Heard. The director, Garry Marshall, shows no feeling for the material—not even false feeling; the script, by Mary Agnes Donoghue, is from Iris Rainer Dart's novel.—P.K. (1/23/89) (Gramercy, Cinema I, Guild, and Embassy.)

Bizarre, Bizarre (1937)—Dadaist frivolity with sequences that one giggles over happily for years. Jacques Prévert wrote and Marcel Carné directed this romantic, satirical comedy, set in Edwardian England, about the English mania for detective fiction. Jean-Louis Barrault is the detective-story reader who decides to commit his own perfect crime by murdering the author (Michel Simon). With Françoise Rosay as Barrault's inamorata (he gathers a bouquet for her by stealing the boutonnières of men who have been clobbered in the Limehouse alleys), Louis Jouvet, and Jean-Pierre Aumont. A memorable, deadpan dinner conversation about a duck à l'orange is the source of the American title. In French.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 20.)

Dangerous Liaisons—One of the least static costume films ever made, and what costumes! The women—Glenn Close, Michelle Pfeiffer, Uma Thurman, Swoosie Kurtz, Mildred Natwick—look as if they'd been dressed by Gainsborough. (Actually, it was James Acheson, who also dressed "The Last Emperor.") Principally about the erotic power games played by the Marquise de Merteuil (Glenn Close) and the Vicomte de Valmont (John Malkovich), who were once lovers but are now allies and co-conspirators, this first-rate piece of work by the daring and agile director Stephen Frears is alive in a way that movies of classics rarely are. The paradisially beautiful Pfeiffer is wonderfully affecting as the pawn of the debauchers' final game. The screenwriter, Christopher Hampton, reworked his 1985 theatrical version of the 1782 novel by Choderlos de Laclos; cinematography by Philippe Rousselot.—P.K. (1/9/89) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 68th St. Playhouse, Festival, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)



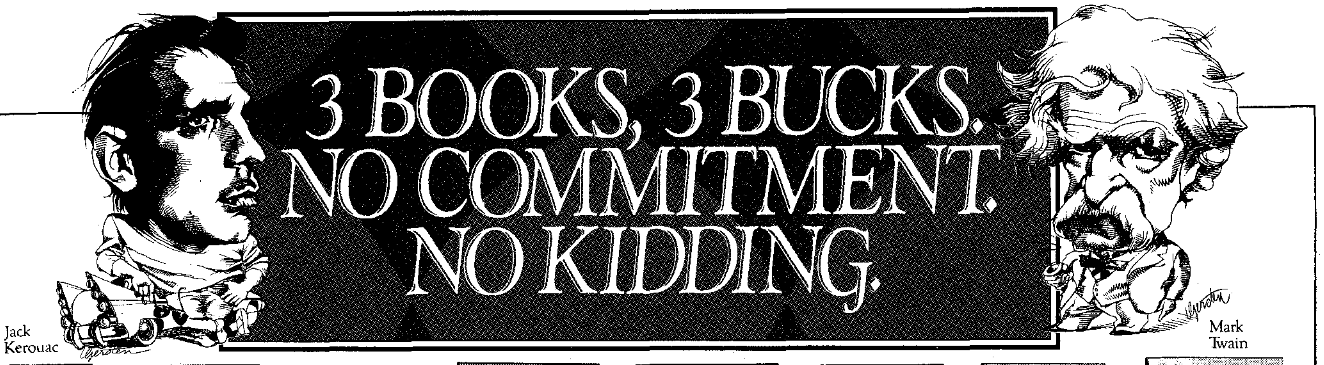
Josephine Baker

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels—Michael Caine and Steve Martin as con men on the Côte d'Azur, in a remake of the 1964 "Bedtime Story." Caine is the slick, discreet Continental who operates by plan and fleeces middle-aged rich American women; Martin is a happy-go-lucky American spaz in wrinkled baggy pants; he's an improviser, a vagabond who chases after the most attractive young women he spots, and shamelessly cadges meals and a few bucks off them. The movie is mildly pleasant; it has amusing moments and a sunny sheen. The director, Frank Oz, takes such a square approach, though, that the action doesn't absorb your full attention. Caine and Martin preen beautifully. At their best, they're like a vaudeville team zapping each other and doing a soft-shoe. But there's not much juice in the roles: we seem to be watching the last pressing of the grapes. With Glenne Headly.—P.K. (1/23/89) (Embassy; through Feb. 14. . . . ¶ Bay Cinema, Plaza, Art Greenwich Twin, and Olympia; through Feb. 16.)

The Dressmaker—The whole cast rises to the occasion—a chance to appear in John McGrath's fine adaptation of the 1973 Beryl Bainbridge novel (published here in 1974 as "The Secret Glass"). Joan Plowright as Nellie, the prudish unmarried dressmaker, and Billie Whitelaw as Margo, the widow with a roving eye who works in a munitions factory, are sisters. The setting is Liverpool in 1944, and the plot centers on what happens when sallow, skinny Rita (Jane Horrocks), the seventeen-year-old niece they have raised, falls in love with Wesley (Tim Ransom), a Yank from Mississippi. This good, inexpensive British movie is about morbid respectability, and the director, Jim O'Brien, makes it possible for the actors to create a maze of claustrophobic subtexts. It's doubtful if either Plowright or Whitelaw has ever before been this scarily effective onscreen; Whitelaw's sky-blue eyes stab you—she seems to have become the nakedest of performers. With Peter Postlethwaite, Pippa Hinchley, and Rosemary Martin.—P.K. (12/12/88) (Paris.)

Go Into Your Dance (1935)—Al Jolson and Ruby Keeler have a terrific number together ("About a Quarter to Nine"), and you get a sense of how magnetic he must have been on the stage when he sings "She's a Latin from Manhattan." The movie isn't topnotch, though; the script is dreary and things don't quite come together. But the cast includes Helen Morgan, Glenda Farrell, Patsy Kelly, Akim Tamiroff, Benny Rubin, Phil Regan, and Barton MacLane. Ruby Keeler had been in many musicals before this one, but she retains her peculiarly appealing (and baffling) amateurishness. Archie Mayo directed.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; starting Feb. 22.)

Kid Galahad (1937)—By 1937, Bette Davis had earned something better than the role of Fluff, girlfriend to a fight manager (Edward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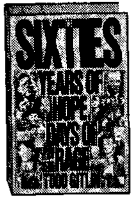
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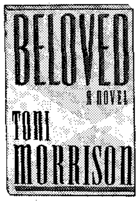
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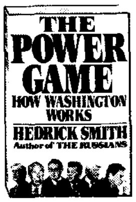
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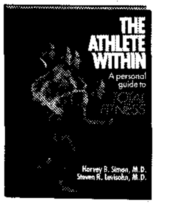
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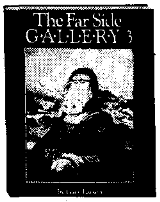
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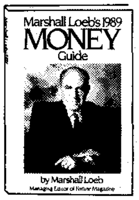
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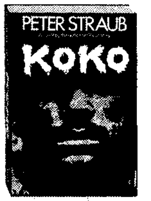
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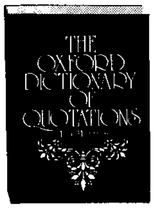
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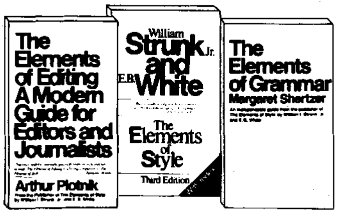
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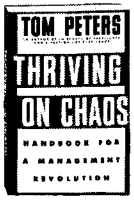
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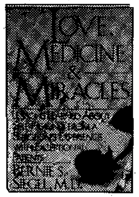
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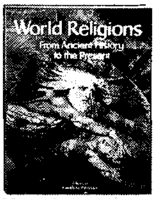
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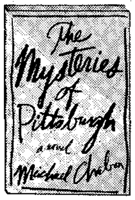
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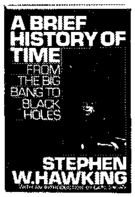
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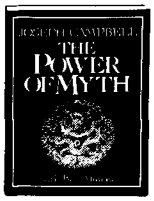
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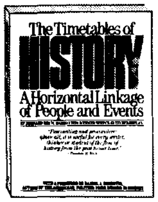
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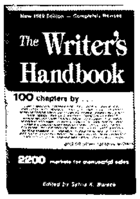
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IN BRIEF—Cont'd

G. Robinson), but the movie was directed by Michael Curtiz, and though it has few dimensions it has pace and "entertainment value." Wayne Morris is the bellhop turned fighter, whom Fluff christens Kid Galahad; Humphrey Bogart is the bad guy; and Jane Bryan plays Robinson's sister. With Harry Carey and, for the finale, a Warners operatic shoot-out in which Robinson and Bogart kill each other.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 21.)

Law of Desire (1987)—One of the rare movies that's sensually exciting and at the same time funny. This flamboyantly glamorous homosexual fantasy by Madrid's gagster-artist Pedro Almodóvar is satirical, romantic, metaphorical; it has wonderful jokes and the exaggerated plot of an absurdist Hollywood melodrama. It doesn't disguise its narcissism; it turns it into bright-colored tragicomedy. Carmen Maura, a powerful actress in the manner of the early Anna Magnani, with the trippiness and self-mockery of Bette Midler, plays Tina, a transsexual who has a hot, roiling temperament. Tina's celebrity brother Pablo (Eusebio Poncela) directs classy homoerotic films. One night, Pablo takes home Antonio (Antonio Banderas), a government minister's son, who has been stalking him; by morning, Antonio loves him, is determined to possess him completely, and refuses to get out of his life. With Miguel Molina, Manuela Velasco, and the male transvestite Bibi Andersen. In Spanish. —P.K. (4/20/87) (Quad Cinema.)

Lawrence of Arabia (1962)—If you went to see it under the delusion that it was going to be about T. E. Lawrence, you probably stayed to enjoy the vastness of the desert and the pleasures of the senses that a huge movie epic can provide. Directed by David Lean, from a script by Robert Bolt, loosely based on Lawrence's "Seven Pillars of Wisdom," this picture fails to give an acceptable interpretation of Lawrence, or to keep its action intelligible, but it is one of the most literate and tasteful and exciting of expensive spectacles. The central figure is played quite stunningly by Peter O'Toole, though he seems to be doing "Lord Jim"—which he was cast in a couple of years later (and then it looked as if he were doing Lawrence all over again). Bolt and Lean turn the hero into such a flamboyant poetic enigma that he is displaced in the film by a simpler hero—Omar Sharif's Ali, a handsome sheikh with liquid brown eyes and conventionally sympathetic lines to speak. As it became apparent that most people in the audience hadn't the remotest idea of what the Arabs and the Turks were doing in the First World War, or which was which, or why the English cared, the question raised by the movie was, Can complicated historical events and a complex hero really get across in a spectacle? With Alec Guinness, José Ferrer, Anthony Quinn, Arthur Kennedy, Jack Hawkins, Claude Rains, Anthony Quayle, and Donald Wolfit. Cinematography by Freddie Young; music by Maurice Jarre. (The film, substantially cut after its first release, has been restored to a more or less definitive version, running 217 minutes.)—P.K. (Ziegfeld.)

This week offers the opportunity to see a pair of rarely screened films by the neglected French master Georges Franju, whose philosophy of movies was that "what pleases is what is terrible, gentle, and poetic." A generation older than the celebrated New Wave filmmakers, Franju never fit comfortably into any category: the body of his work consists mainly of short documentaries, lyrical horror movies, and literary adaptations. On the double bill at the Thalia SoHo are "La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret" (1970), a Zola adaptation; and "Judex" (1963), based on a silent serial by the great Louis Feuillade—Franju's version isn't so much a melodrama as it is a reverie on the absurd beauty of the melodramatic imagination. If you're searching for a familiar face, there's plenty of Garbo on view at the Public, where a two-and-a-half-week retrospective of the star's Hollywood career is winding up. This week: "As You Desire Me," "Mata Hari," "The Painted Veil," "Two-Faced Woman" (her last film), Clarence Brown's "Anna Karenina," and "Grand Hotel."

Marked Woman (1937)—As the smart, lively young clip-joint hostess who turns police informer, Bette Davis is the embodiment of the sensational side of thirties movies. This racketeering melodrama is based on the career of Lucky Luciano, who lived high at the Waldorf-Astoria on the proceeds of a thousand prostitutes. In the film, Eduardo Ciannelli plays the role, with Humphrey Bogart (never at his best when cast on the side of officialdom—but then, who is?) taking over Thomas E. Dewey's function as prosecutor. The film has the tawdry simplicities of many of the thirties movies that were built out of headline stories, but it also has more impact than most of the melodramas played out in more elevated surroundings. Lloyd Bacon directed.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 21.)

Mississippi Burning—Set in Mississippi in the summer of 1964, it opens with a fictionalized re-creation of the murder of the three civil-rights workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner—but it isn't really about the civil-rights movement. The director, Alan Parker, treats Southerners the way he treated the Turks ten years ago in "Midnight Express." And he twists facts here as he did there, with the same apparent objective: to come up with garish forms of violence. Two F.B.I. men (Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe) arrive to find out what happened to the three activists, and a huge manhunt is initiated. The movie hinges on the ploy that the F.B.I. men can't stop the K.K.K. from its terrorism against blacks until they swing over to vigilante tactics. And we're put in the position of applauding the F.B.I.'s dirtiest forms of intimidation. Hackman is superb, and there's impressive work by Frances McDormand, Brad Dourif, Park Overall, Stephen Tobolowsky, and others. But the film is morally repugnant. The script is credited to Chris Gerolmo (Parker says he rewrote it).—P.K. (12/26/88) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Warner.)

Mr. Arkadin (1955)—Orson Welles directed and starred in this story of a fabulously wealthy dope smuggler who hires a man to trace his past. Ambitious and flamboyant but, whether because of technical problems or script problems or both, a fiasco. With Michael Redgrave, Akim Tamiroff, and Katina Paxinou. —P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 17-18.)

The Naked Gun—An explosion of sixth-grade humor: terrible puns, broad slapstick, crushingly obvious sexual innuendo, a strategically detonated fart . . . The filmmakers (most of whom were also involved in "Airplane!") are low-comedy purists. The movie could be dopier only if it were longer: its stupidity has a relentlessness and a formal rigor that are practically French. (The scrupulous aesthetic consistency also extends to the cinematography and the editing, which are sixth-grade quality, too.) With Leslie Nielsen, Priscilla Presley, Ricardo Montalban, George Kennedy, O. J. Simpson, John Houseman, and Jeannette Charles as Queen Elizabeth. Written by David and Jerry Zucker, Jim Abrahams, and Pat Proft, and directed by David Zucker.—T.R. (D. W. Griffith, and Embassy; through Feb. 16.)

Orchestra Wives (1942)—Livelier than the title (which sounds like a statistical classification) suggests. It's the swing era, the band is Glenn Miller's (with Tex Beneke and the Modernaires), and the screenwriters, Karl Tunberg and Darrell Ware, use the shopworn love triangle of an innocent small-town girl (Ann Rutherford) who marries a musician (George Montgomery) and then comes up against his old flame, the band's vocalist (Lynn Bari), as a framework for all the snappy repartee they can pile on. Archie Mayo directed, and the picture has a seedy, unassuming pungency. Best of all, the moviemakers were prepared to jettison the story line for the sake of entertainment: suddenly, at the end of the picture, the Nicholas Brothers, that great team of dancers, come out of nowhere and do one of their most dizzying acrobatic tap routines, to "I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo." The tunes include "Serenade in Blue," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," and "Bugle Call Rag."—P.K. (Thalia SoHo; Feb. 20.)

Michelle Pfeiffer

Pelle the Conqueror—An aging, weak-willed Swedish widower (Max von Sydow) and his young son (Pelle Hvenegaard) emigrate to Denmark and find work on a large estate, where they're exploited and abused. The boy, more spirited than his father, ultimately escapes. The movie, written and directed by Bille August from a novel by Martin Andersen Nexo, isn't as dreary as it sounds. August directs with great skill and feeling, and the cinematography, by Jorgen Persson ("Elvira Madigan"), is sensational. The images are never simply beautiful—they always carry a strong emotional and dramatic charge. Yet there's a basic dullness in Nexo's material which August can't transcend. For most of the picture's two and a half hours, we're moved and bored simultaneously. In Danish and Swedish.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza.)

Princess Tam Tam (1935)—Few stars of the musical stage have been as purely mythic as Josephine Baker, and few stage stars on the screen live up to their myths, whether true or false, half so well as she. This film, the second of two talkies made at the height of her fame, was shot partly on location in North Africa, and it expresses the French idea of La Backair as a beautiful animal. She plays a black Eliza Doolittle, lugging sheep around on her neck until she is discovered by her Henry Higgins (Albert Préjean) and taken to Paris, where she is passed off in society as an Indian princess. Inevitably, "native" music plays, the princess starts throwing her bare legs around and rolling her hips, and her mentor scuttles back to his wife. Though Baker was given white leading men, she was never romantically involved with them. Here, just to make sure we don't think Préjean is playing around with a black woman, he's made a novelist, and the whole princess-in-Paris plot is only a story he's writing. With Robert Arnoux, Germaine Aussey, and Viviane Romance. Directed by Edmond T. Gréville. In French.—A.C. (Film Forum 1 and 2.)

Rain Man—Dustin Hoffman is Raymond, an autistic savant who lives in an institution in Cincinnati, and Tom Cruise is his huckster brother Charlie, an L.A. car dealer, who kidnaps him, hoping to get hold of some of the three million dollars that their father has left in trust for Raymond's care. Hoffman keeps his actor's engine chugging and upstages the movie; Cruise's performance consists of not smiling too much—so as not to distract his fans from watching Hoffman. The director, Barry Levinson—it's his temperament—stretches out the scenes until they yawn. But the picture has its effectiveness: people are crying at it. Of course they're crying at it—it's a piece of wet kitsch. With Valeria Golino; Ronald Bass was the principal screenwriter.—P.K. (2/6/89) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews New York Twin, and Loews Paramount.)

The Razor's Edge (1946)—Tyrone Power plays the Somerset Maugham hero who journeys all the way to India and figures that he has hit upon a mystical bonanza when he hears a bewhiskered yogi murmur, "There is in every one of us a spark of the infinite goodness." Nobody in the film seems to be very agile mentally, from the Chicago débutante (beautiful Gene Tierney) whom the hero leaves behind to the girl he almost marries—poor, sad Sophie (Anne Baxter). There are quantities of Chicago mansions and country clubs, French bistros and Indian lamaseries, and thousands of extras to keep the sets from looking bare. The performers move about in a vague, somnambulistic manner befitting a literary masterpiece. With Herbert Marshall and Clifton Webb. Edmund Goulding directed.—P.K. (Cinema Village; Feb. 20-21.)

The Talk of the Town (1942)—Leopold Dilg (Cary Grant), a vaguely radical factory worker falsely accused of arson and manslaughter by the management, breaks jail and is hidden in the home of a vacationing judge (Ronald Colman) by the judge's soft-hearted, fuzzy-headed landlady (Jean Arthur), who is convinced of Dilg's innocence. The ideas are garbled and silly, but the people are so pleasant that the picture manages to be quite amiable and high-spirited anyway. George Stevens directed; with Glenda Farrell, Edgar Buchanan, Rex Ingram, Emma Dunn, and Charles Dingle.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Feb. 16.)

Tango Bar—A disguised anthology film, in which the managers of a fictitious Buenos Aires cabaret, rivals in love, give nightly seminars in the tango, its history and mystique. The dance episodes, a dismaying miscellany of styles and treatments, include vintage and non-vintage Hollywood clips; Valentino's tango gets mixed up with its rendition in the 1951 movie biography "Valentino," and nobody notices the difference. A Puerto Rican production, directed by Marcos Zurinaga, with Raul Julia as head interlocutor.—A.C. (Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Tap—A thirties-style semi-musical with a good strong Cagneyish role for Gregory Hines. He plays an ex-con whose true vocation is to carry on the great black tap-dance tradition founded on jazz. That's Hines' vocation in real life, too, only his way of realizing it on the screen—he hooks up with a rock band and a synthesizer, and his taps go boom—is a lot less controversial than it would be in real life. Written and directed by Nick Castle, Jr., the film is the first to tell us about the black tap community in feature-length fiction terms, and those terms finally defeat it. The numbers are staged in old-movie-musical formats, white folks are everywhere, Harlem doesn't exist. But Hines is liberated, and is exciting for the first time on the screen. With Sammy Davis, Jr.; the young dancer Savion Glover; and, playing themselves, Sandman Sims, Bunny Briggs, Jimmy Slyde, Harold Nicholas, Arthur Duncan, Steve Condos, and Pat Rico.—A.C. (2/6/89; under Dancing.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gemini, Loews Orpheum, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Three Fugitives—With Nick Nolte and Martin Short, directed by Francis Veber. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Quad Cinema, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1.)

True Believer—With James Woods and Robert Downey, Jr., directed by Joseph Ruben. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Beekman, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Olympia, and Movieland; starting Feb. 17.)

Twins—High Concept at its deadliest. A botched experiment in genetic engineering produces a wildly mismatched set of twins: Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito. They meet for the first time as adults in their thirties; high jinks ensue. It's actually worse than you'd expect. The screenplay is credited to four guys, and can't even claim one good joke per writer. And the direction, by Ivan Reitman, is so inert that you'd swear the movie was a sequel to something. Also with Chloe Webb, Kelly Preston, and, too briefly, Trey Wilson.—T.R. (West Side Cinema. . . . ¶ Baronet; through Feb. 16.)

The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1988)—Directed by Philip Kaufman, this adaptation of Milan Kundera's novel is touching in sophisticated ways that you don't expect from an American director. A prankish sex comedy, it treats modern political events with a delicate—yet almost sly—sense of tragedy. It's the way the variations of jealousy and erotic attraction are played out by the three principal actors—an Englishman (Daniel Day-Lewis), a Swedish woman (Lena Olin), and a Frenchwoman (Juliette Binoche), all playing Czechs—that gives the movie its wonderfully unresolved texture. The story begins in Prague in 1968, during the period of freedom of expression and artistic flowering. Day-Lewis's Tomas is a hedonist, a womanizer, and an eminent young brain surgeon; Olin's Sabina, a painter who is his longtime sex partner, and Binoche's Tereza, whom he marries, represent the two poles of his life—lightness and weight. Kaufman has an exuberant temperament, and the spirit of the film is younger and looser than that of the book; a short two hours and fifty-three minutes, the picture has a whirling beauty.—P.K. (2/8/88) (57th St. Playhouse.)

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown—The most original pop writer-director of the eighties, Pedro Almodóvar is Godard with a human face—a happy face. The artificial is what sends him sky high, and the Madrid of this film is (as the closing song has it) "Puro Teatro." This is a movie where after a while you can't tell sexy from funny. Pepa (Carmen Maura), an actress who works in TV and commercials, turns on her answering machine and learns that she has been jilted. Infuriated, she dashes around, on spike heels, in a short, tight skirt, trying to confront her long-time live-in lover, the elegant, vain Iván (Fernando Guillén). The women of the title include Iván's early lover (Julieta Serrano), his new lover (Kiti Manver), and two (Rossy De Palma and María Barranco) who are involved with his son (Antonio Banderas). Sleek-legged and chic, they run the theatrical gamut. Cinematography by José Luis Alcaine. In Spanish.—P.K. (11/14/88) (Cinema Studio.)

Working Girl—Mike Nichols made this yuppie Cinderella romance, with Melanie Griffith as Tess McGill, a poor but enterprising girl from Staten Island who fights off the sleazoid bosses and struggles to break through the educational-background barriers and climb from Wall Street secretary to executive. We're supposed to be cheered by watching Tess become part of the establishment. Griffith is very appealing, and she carries what there is of the picture, but this is the kind of star performance in which the heroine's misty eyes and soft-focus smiles (which suggest bleariness) are supposed to turn our brains to jelly. After a bouncy, promising opening, the staging becomes so broad you can't tell whether satire is intended or just dumb jokes. With Sigourney Weaver, Harrison Ford, Joan Cusack, and Alec Baldwin. The script is credited to Kevin Wade.—P.K. (1/9/89) (34th St. East, Waverly, 23rd St. West Triplex, Regency, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Coronet; through Feb. 16. . . . ¶ Baronet; starting Feb. 17.)

Zou Zou (1934)—Starring Josephine Baker. The pseudo-biographical plot casts her as a Creole laundress who becomes a music-hall star. Baker wasn't actually a washerwoman's daughter, as was widely believed, or a Creole, but she did play Offenbach's "La Créole" later that year. She had left America in 1925, a maniacally gifted chorus girl and a clown. In Paris, she became the magnificent Ebony Venus. But Baker never stopped being a clown, and she danced voraciously, eating up space and using every bit of her long, elegant, antic body—and her eyes and her fingers. She also sang, in a voice that Vernon Duke described as "a small but quite exquisite coloratura soprano." Her big number here, "C'est Lui," remained one of her signature songs. Jean Gabin sings, too, though the racial prejudices of the time cast him as her adopted brother rather than as her lover. Marc Allégret directed. In French.—A.C. (Film Forum 1 and 2.)

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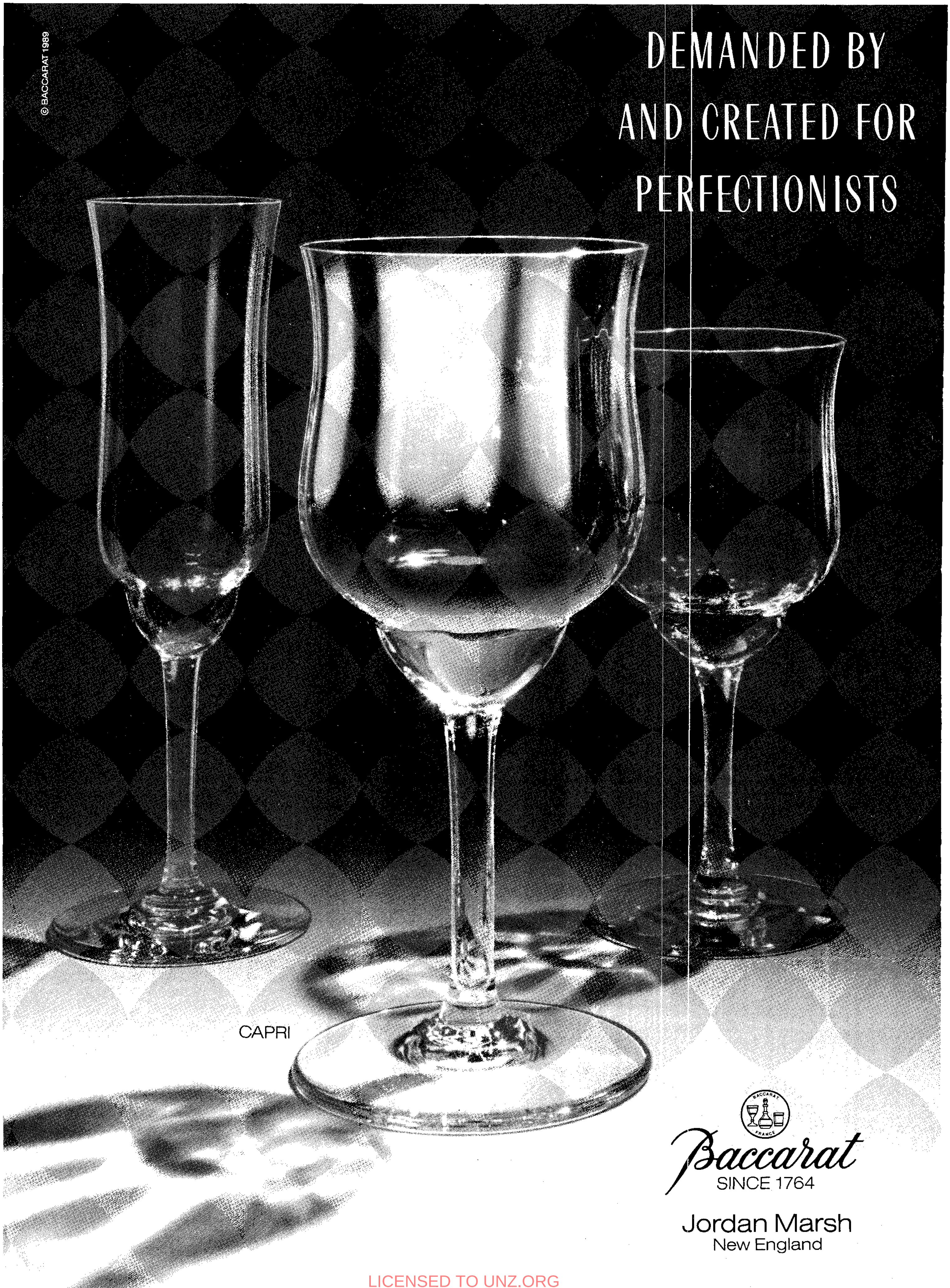
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

IN St. Peter's Church in our nation's capital a few weeks ago, leader after leader stood in front of the photograph of a short, round, mustached man and eulogized him—Francisco Mendes Filho, the assassinated Brazilian environmentalist. Senator Robert Kasten, of Wisconsin, called Mendes his "friend" and "ally." William Reilly, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, said that Mendes was an "inspiration." The Brazilian Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Marcílio Marques Moreira, called Mendes's work important to the whole world. But it was Mendes's cousin Raimundo de Barros—like Mendes, a rubber tapper from the Amazon—whose words most moved the congregation, some three hundred mourners. Speaking in Portuguese, de Barros said, "We are so humble and we are so poor I would never have dreamed that I would be coming to this great country and talking before so many important people. I feel what Chico Mendes felt when he spoke to your Congress and also attended the Inter-American Development Bank annual meeting a couple of years ago. He said, 'Why do you hear us more than our own country does?' "

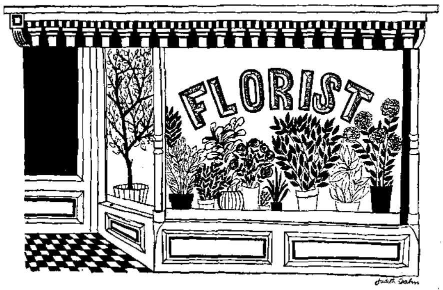
For most of his life, Mendes fought against devastation of the Amazon rain forest. He led one of the world's very few movements of indigenous peoples against the spoiling of their habitats. Mendes was murdered on December 22nd, in the small river town of Xapuri, in Acre, the westernmost state of the Brazilian Amazon. He was on his way to his outdoor bathhouse when waiting gunmen shot him. It was an end he had expected. He had been arrested, beaten, and tortured many times, and had escaped death in several previous ambushes.

Mendes was incorruptible. At his death, he had the equivalent of two dollars. But he gave a voice to the poor of the Amazon—to three hundred thousand rubber tappers and a million farmers and hunters who have been the victims of two decades of government-supported cattle ranching and hydroelectric projects that took away their land. Mendes persuaded the Brazilian government to set aside large reserves in which the forest would be untouched. He prevailed upon multinational banks to suspend financing for roads carving into the forest. And he saved thousands of acres from fire.

These are excerpts from his last interview:

> If an angel came down from the sky and could guarantee that my death could strengthen this fight, it would be a fair exchange. But experience has taught us the opposite. And so I want to live. Because a lot of talk and many burials won't save the Amazon. . . .
>
> Today there is a corridor of smoke from Mato Grosso do Sul to Acre. . . . In the last half century Amazonia has never seen so many fires as in 1988. They are burning everything. Our airports were closed one week in 1987 because of the smoke. This year they were closed one month for the same reason. When you look down from the airplane, Amazonia is nothing but smoke. How it hurts!

Mendes, who was born in 1944, tapped rubber from the age of eight, making his rounds in the forest, scoring trees, and catching the latex in cups. He learned to read and write at eighteen, from a dissident Army officer hiding in the forest, and discovered how the rubber barons cheated the tappers and kept them in debt. He began to sell directly to the middlemen. He taught other rubber tappers to read and write, so they could keep their own accounts, and local politicians accused him of creating a class of agitators. For two years, he hid, fearing for his life. He became head of the local rubber tappers' union in 1981, after the previous president was murdered.



In 1985, Mendes left the Amazon for the first time, to lead a hundred and fifty rubber tappers to Brasília to protest the clearing of the forest. In 1987, he left Brazil for the first time, to ask Washington to stop funding road projects that destroyed the jungle and worsened the greenhouse effect. For this he received both the Global 500 prize from the United Nations and an award from the Better World Society that year. Immediately after he received the latter award, he returned home. It was just before the rainy season, and he had to tap rubber and harvest Brazil nuts to feed his family.

We spoke to Raimundo de Barros before he flew back to Brazil. He explained to us that the people responsible for Mendes's death were Darli and Alvarino Alves, brothers who were small ranchers and had claimed a part of a rubber tappers' reserve as their own. Mendes organized demonstrations in May of last year, in which several rubber tappers were wounded, and within the next few months several tappers were killed. He suspected that the killings were the Alveses' doing, and he tried to have them extradited to the state of Paraná, where they were wanted for the murder of other workers. The police of Xapuri warned Mendes that he was marked for death. He refused to leave.

The bishop who buried Mendes, the judge investigating the murder, Mendes's widow, Raimundo de Barros himself, and other union leaders have all been threatened. Darli Alves and his son, who has confessed to Mendes's murder, have been imprisoned, but police are still searching the jungle for Alvarino. "They will possibly kill more people, including me," de Barros told us. "But the fight of the people of the forest will not die. Chico had so much courage. I am more afraid."

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Weather Report

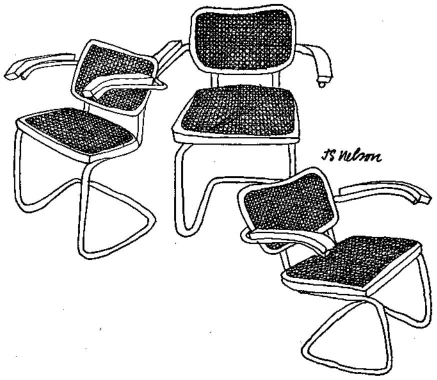
ON the first day of this month, NBC's Tom Brokaw described the nation's weather as "mild, wild, and altogether wacky." The wildest and wackiest parts were out West, where that big Arctic front was wedging into Montana, pushing wind-chill temperatures toward eighty degrees below zero. In New York—mild that day, with a high in the mid-sixties—we had a hard time imagining what it could feel like to be a hundred and forty degrees colder, so we called a friend in Missoula.

"This will give you an idea of what we've been through," she told us. "Two days ago, I walked to my optometrist's office with my jacket flapping open. No hat, no gloves. And I was sweating when I got there. It was spring! Then I heard that ten, maybe eleven boxcars had blown off the railroad tracks that morning. Up north, near Browning. Blown right off a moving train. I called my friend Connie right away. She lives on the edge of town here, with ducks and chickens and a golden Labrador who's so big he can just rest his head on the table when you're eating. She was pretty excited. 'I heard that the A & W in Columbia Falls blew away, too,' she said. 'And a church roof in Augusta.'

"Something was definitely on the way. But since we're farther south, and on the other side of the mountains, we didn't get it for another day and a half. We just waited. And it stayed warm and calm here, although we began to hear about blizzards and closed roads nearby. It felt like a very long version of that moment before the starting gun, when you can hear the crowd rustling and coughing those little coughs. But now it's here. Oh, yes. The last time I was able to get through to the weather service, a couple of hours ago, the temperature was fifteen below, and the wind was blowing thirty-five miles per hour. And I think it's even colder now.

"Right after I called the weather service, I walked around the block once, wearing many layers. Testing the waters, so to speak. Everything—the streets, the sidewalks, the park—looked scoured and empty. There was just a little snow falling, and the wind made it smoky, like dry ice. The first thing I noticed was that my nostrils stuck together each time I took a breath. Then my soft contact lenses started to become hard contact lenses, and my eyelashes frosted up. Then the pain started. Aching cheekbones, stinging fingers. Anything very far from my heart felt like it was headed for big trouble.

"When I got back—five minutes after I started—I warmed up, and then I did another experiment. At 5 P.M. on the dot, I placed three objects on the walk between my house and the garage: a thick mug of water I'd poured at full boil; a ripe banana; and a fourth of a cup of Cutty Sark Scotch whiskey. The Scotch seemed like the most dramatic and showy part of the experiment—ethyl alcohol freezes at minus 178 degrees Fahrenheit—so I put it in my Charles and Di souvenir coffee cup. Do you want to know what happened in one short hour? O.K. The water froze solid. Really solid. That ice looked *ancient*. The banana felt like a rock. And the Scotch was very cold but still liquid. I brought the water and the banana inside, and the banana turned brown and collapsed. Just a few minutes ago, my cat and I ran outside to check on the Cutty Sark. The local television news had just warned us about the dangers of frostbite. They said no one should go outside in this wind and cold without using the buddy system. So Squeak—that's my cat—and I were using the buddy system. I should say at this point that the TV news wasn't absolutely precise. I have a friend who talked to an emergency-room doctor, and he said that frost*bite* isn't the biggest problem in this weather; it's frost*nip*, which is a superficial kind of frostbite. Frost*nip* turns the outside layers of the skin to ice crystals but doesn't freeze it solid. There's a difference.



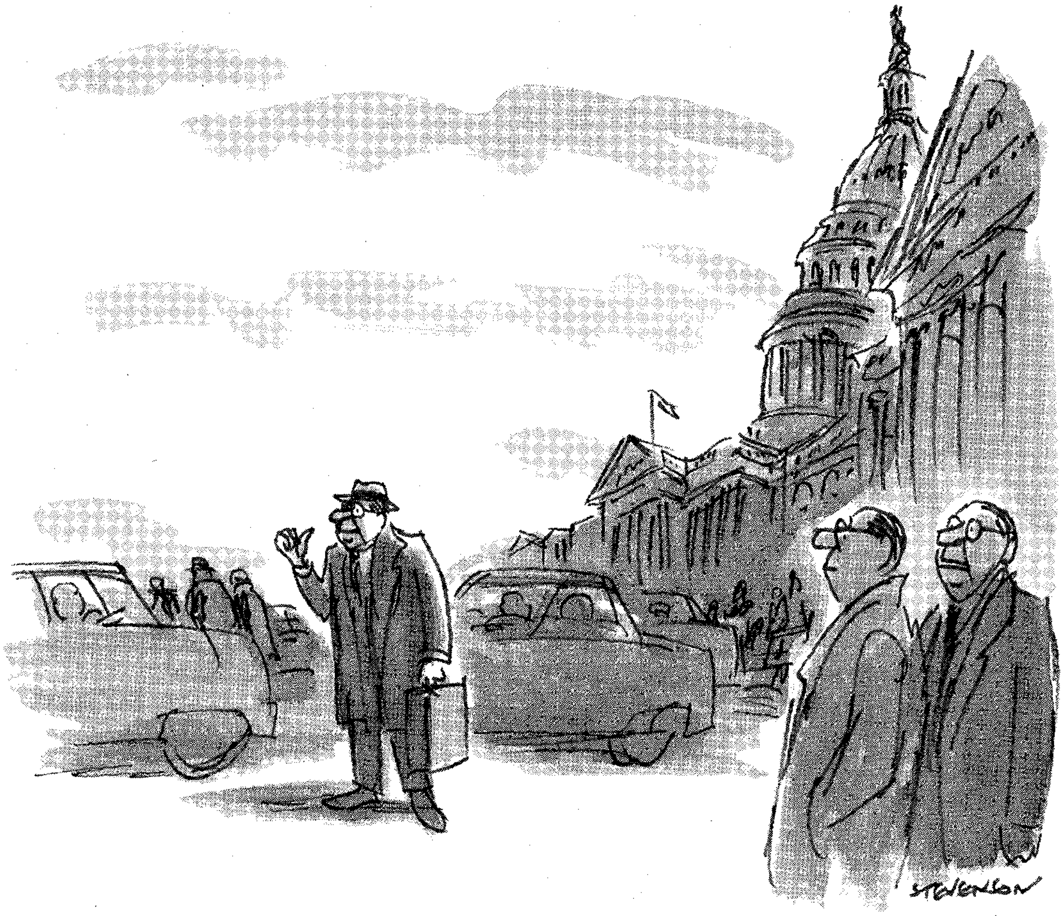
"Anyway, after we got outside, Squeak's brain caught up with her nerve endings, and she gave me this stricken, betrayed look. 'This one isn't my fault,' I told her. Then I started the car, so I could leave it running for a while. Move it or lose it. The seat was a brick. The gearshift moved like—like what? It's hard to describe. Like feet in a nightmare. The door handle stung. It's scary. You start to remember all the old skin-on-metal stories about kids who lick frozen monkey bars or rain pipes, then panic and lose chunks of their tongues."

We called Montana again the next day to see how things were going. Our friend answered on the seventh ring, breathless.

"I just started the car again," she said. "It didn't want to turn over. I had to be very patient and persuasive, and that's hard when it's eighty below. I didn't wear gloves, because I thought it was going to take only a minute. I can barely hold the phone. Oh, I should tell you, the Cutty Sark has turned to thick slush. About an hour ago, I called Ron Erickson—a chemist who teaches environmental studies at the university—to ask him what this cold was causing down at the molecular level. I mentioned entropy, just as a shot in the dark. He said that cold made molecules move more slowly. 'They are losing vibrative energy' is how he put it. But he also said—and this is the eerie part, I think—that molecular systems weren't becoming more chaotic, as they would in an entropic state. He said they were becoming more *ordered*. 'Ice is more ordered than water,' he said. This seemed significant to me. Maybe tidiness is overrated. Maybe tidiness, neatness, orderliness just put you one step closer to death—the ultimate loss of vibrative energy. I mean, you could think of it that way.

"I called Connie immediately to see what she thought about this theory, and she answered on her cordless phone from the basement, where things sounded very busy. 'I'm applying my hair dryer to a frozen water pipe,' she said, above a whirr. 'Just like the paper said to do. I had to bring the chickens and ducks inside. Can you hear them? They're running around making a big fat mess. One of the roosters likes to fight, so I left a radio on down here last night. I thought if he heard human voices and music he'd be intimidated.'

"Just as I started to bring up the situation with the molecules, I heard an enormous gurgle and the sound of rushing water. 'Did you hear that?' Connie shouted, and she put the phone right up to the pipe, so I could get the full effect of the roar. 'It worked! Water's rushing through the pipe! It's a miracle!' "



"I understand Senator Quigley was really counting on that raise."

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Whereabouts

EVER since the *National Geographic* reported last fall that most Americans come close to being geographical illiterates (with eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds leading the dismal pack), we'd been planning to drop in at Tufts University, just north of Boston, where for the last few years each of eleven hundred or so entering freshmen has received, compliments of the faculty, copies of two Rand McNally publications: a sixty-four-page World Atlas (it retails at $3.95) and a two-hundred-and-seventy-two-page "World Facts in Brief" ($9.95). The other day, we finally made it to the campus, in Medford, and we called first on Jean Mayer, the eminent nutritionist, who has been president of Tufts since 1976. He was feeling chipper. Tuftsman John Sununu had just been installed in the White House, and other Old Medford Boys—Lauro F. Cavazos, the Secretary of Education, for one—were standing tall in the Bush regime. "Tufts may be holding the same position now that Harvard usually has," Mayer said. As for geography, he was disinclined to state flatly that his undergraduates' freebies have given them a marked advantage over their peers. "The trouble with geography goes back to our secondary-school system," he said. "Our kids come here not knowing either world geography or world history. They don't know where they are or when they are. I keep asking other university presidents to change their entrance requirements. If they'd all demand two years of world history and geography, the schools would have to come around. But, as it is, some kids, moving around from school to school, may get the Civil War three times and the Revolution never. And at our level, since there aren't many survey courses, you find kids who have taken 'Chinese Nationalism from the Boxer Rebellion to Mao' or 'History of the Women's Movement in Africa' but don't know whether Queen Elizabeth came before or after Joan of Arc, or where Bulgaria and Tanzania are."

President Mayer turned us over to his provost, Sol Gittleman, who got the book giveaways started. "The idea was, and is, that when your students read about Armenia or the Persian Gulf they should know where these places are," he told us. He had gaps of his own to fill in, he added, and explained, "I was born in Hoboken, and just about the only geography we got was in the sixth grade and consisted of our having to memorize the names of all twenty-one counties in New Jersey." Evidently a no-nonsense man, Mr. Gittleman showed us a copy of an exhortatory letter he distributes to all matriculating freshmen; it states that their Rand McNallys "should become part of your permanent library, for the past, present, and future," and that the atlas "should be next to your bed or in your book bag at all times, so that when needed, you can locate the Gulf of Sidra, the Iraqi/Iranian border, Bhopal, Chernobyl, or the Strait of Hormuz.”

Among a dozen or more undergraduates we bumped into as the day went on, feelings about the books were decidedly mixed. Many Tufts seniors know something about at least part of the outside world, because it has long been a Tufts tradition for them to spend their junior year travelling. One young man, who had done Europe by bicycle, said that his atlas had helped him learn in advance the altitude of certain Alps and Apennines but that, even so, most of his geography stemmed from watching “Jeopardy!” A sophomore who had already gone to Europe and Asia and is planning to spend her junior year in Singapore confessed that she had never looked at her book bonuses and that if they were anywhere near any bedside of hers it would probably be the one back home in Milwaukee.

Another female sophomore: “I’ve found my atlas useful whenever I wonder where Chile is.”

A male junior: “I already had an atlas.”

A female sophomore: “I’ve forgotten I even got those books. What did you say they were?”

We did encounter someone who’d carried her atlas all around China last summer. “One of the things I like to do best is look at maps,” she said.

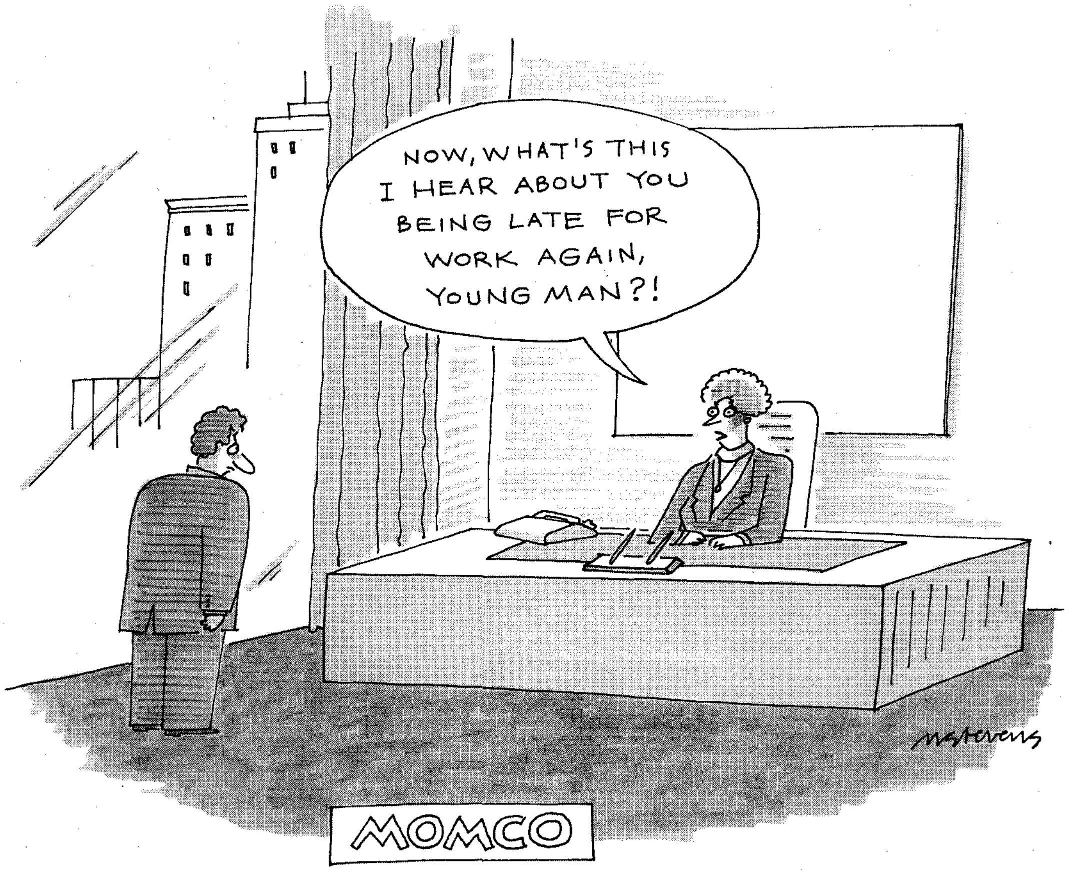
Good Times

A YOUNG woman we know writes:

The other day, I got out my high-school yearbook—something I do whenever I’m bummed out on adult life. The yearbook is black leather with a sketch of a white thunderbird, our school mascot, on the front. Around the bird is an oval frame of white dots. I had drawn the yin-and-yang sign inside every dot. The yearbook theme that year was the movies. The inside cover reads “A Thunderbird Film Review,” and the next page is designed to look like a movie title—“Let the Good Times Roll,” in bright-blue letters over a cartoon of fireworks going off. After that are special sections—for example, “Women’s Liberation, Battle of the Sexes Hits Crestview.” (This was quite a while after the battle of the sexes had hit the rest of the world.) There is also a “Love” section—pictures of couples—and in white letters over the black silhouette of a girl it says, “Out of 1600 chicks and dudes only one appeared unique to you, when that one face you had watched for all day finally appeared all else seemed insignificant, Come on baby, let the good times roll.” The next page has all the words to the Helen Reddy song “I Am Woman” and the words to “She’s a Lady.” I never knew a single person in school who liked those songs.

The album part of the yearbook was called “The Cast”—starring the seniors, co-starring the juniors, featuring the sophomores, and introducing the freshmen. The administration and personnel were special guest stars. Some of the more memorable special guest stars were Mrs. Rivetke (I’m using phony names, since they capture a truer essence than the real ones), who looked exactly like the Fly and taught earth science, and Mrs. Aimly, who taught German and thought she was very young and hip. The picture she used in the yearbook was her college-graduation portrait. Then, there was Mr. Mace, the French teacher, who was suave and debonair and used to throw parties at his house for the French students. Kids would drive by on weekends and make up stories about what they saw going on inside. And Mr. Kantor, who looked as if he ate three big steaks a day. He taught drivers’ ed and always told us to look around the room at one another, because in a year five of us would be dead in car wrecks. Mr. Henry, who doesn’t look at all cute to me now, had all the girls in love with him. Mr. Wurner was the teacher everyone thought was the most cool, because he was old and still went to peace marches. Then, there was the terror of Crestview High, Gwynlyn B. Royce, who taught typing. She had a tight black bun and wore tailored black suits, black opaque hose, and red high heels. Miss Royce was over fifty, and, as far as any of us knew, her only ambition was to turn out the fastest typists on the planet. One night, she was seen drinking cocktails alone at a bar called the Twilite.

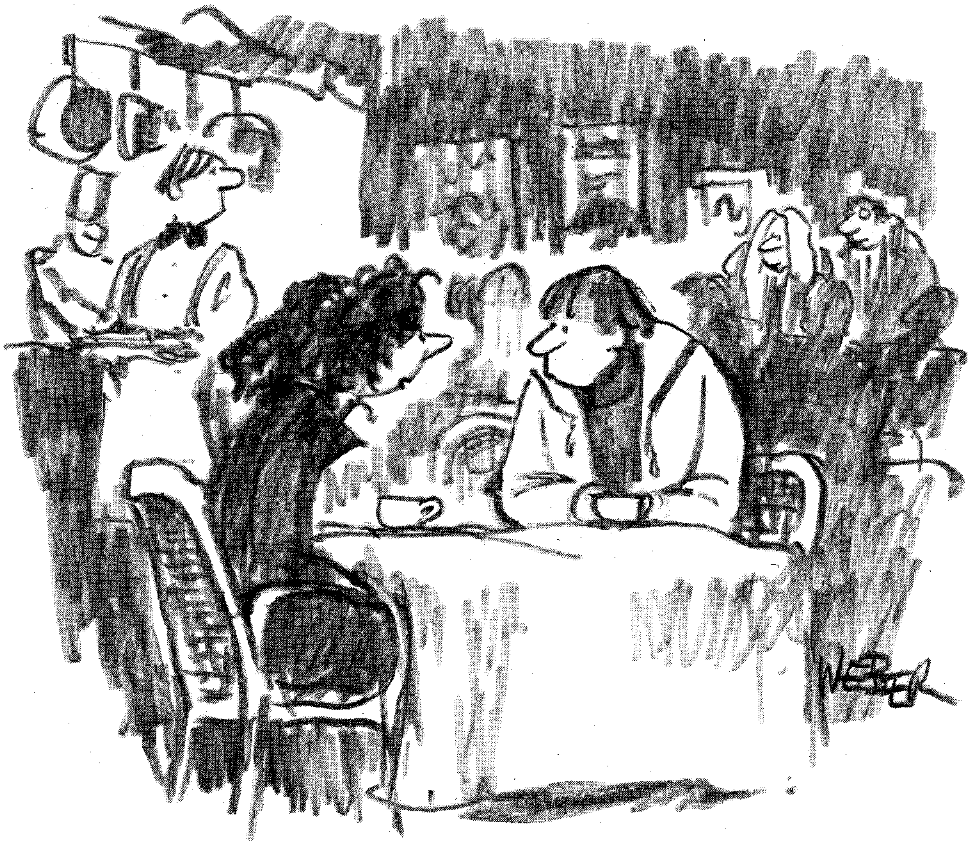
Looking through the album, I’m always struck by how deceiving the pictures


NOW, WHAT'S THIS I HEAR ABOUT YOU BEING LATE FOR WORK AGAIN, YOUNG MAN?!
MOMCO
mstevens

are. If you had never gone to Crestview, you might say Press Northrup was cute. Wrong. He was a total greaser, and used to drag-race around the parking lot. Girlfriends who look at my yearbook stop at the picture of Peter Sinclair and say, "God, he's beautiful." But Peter Sinclair was a thief and, still worse, a narc.

More than looking at the pictures I like reading what people wrote in my book. Robert Relnevo wore wire-rim glasses, was on the swim team, and always had sun-bleached hair and tan skin, and was the most sought-after boy in school. He wrote, "Once we're out of that rat hole and I'm on my feet again I'm gonna hold on till that eagle grins nobody owns you when your down and out. Love Robert." (Robert was the William Hurt of Crestview.) Jeff wrote, "To look at when you get old, Lacey. Those were the days my friend we thought they'd never end, Oh yes those were the days. Love Jeff." Jeff was younger than I was by two years. We really liked each other, but our age difference was a big deal then. We used to skip class and hang out at the river and listen to "Itchycoo Park" over and over on the eight-track in my car.

Callie Nathan had been one of my best friends since fourth grade. We were sneaking a cigarette in the bathroom when she signed my book: "What can I say to such a friend, we'll never forget our childhood. I've seen you grow from a mixed-up kid to a really fine woman. I love you, Callie." After I went to my next class and read what Callie had written, it bugged me. I couldn't figure out why I was more mixed up than she was. It seemed like the stuff my teachers had written. "I'd say you definitely progressed—maturity means sticking with math even when you can't have fun. That's what growing up is all about. Be responsible, Mr. Lotche." "To a vastly improved gal. You've got a good sense of humor and a god-awful temper. Best wishes, Miss Morris Harper." (She wasn't a teacher; she was the girls' dean. But I did spend a lot of time in her office.) My English teacher wrote, above a picture of him teaching class, "I enjoyed seeing you mature the way you have. Always keep a goal. Marvin Mavin." A few years after we graduated, Mr. Mavin was arrested for a sex offense.



"I wish I could get to Woody Allen. I think I could help him arrest his slide."

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Then, there was my note from Miss Gwynlyn B. Royce. During study hall, she confiscated my yearbook and wrote, "Miss W., You've been a troublemaker for four years. My one regret for you is that I wasn't your teacher, counselor, or principal. Your sweet talk would not have worked on me. I suspect your personality is already molded so I can only hope that jail will do for you what education has not." She signed her name in big, ornate cursive letters. As it turned out, the school retired Miss Royce that year. I don't think it was because of age.

The one inscription that still pains me a little to read is from David Renoir. He was my boyfriend all through sophomore year, and we had planned to spend our lives together. "Dear Lacey, it's finally over. I hope to see you this summer and you can go camping with me and my family. Love You, David." The family David was referring to was himself, his wife, and their baby. David had never even told me we'd broken up when I found out, over summer vacation, that he had got Jodie Etheridge pregnant and was going to marry her.

Last, I read the short notes—the ones zipped off between classes, when there was no chance to think that what you were writing might be read again years later. "Lacey, can you believe you're out of school for good? No one can ever tell you what to do again. Love Always—Jane." "Dear Lacey, have a fun summer, 'cause I think everyone should have fun. Love, Tamara." "We'll party together every summer for sure, Love Larry Lee." "Lacey, Stay high—have fun. Pax tecum, Pam." "Enjoy life. B. Watts." "Friends Forever, Love Luanne."

No Swimsuits

A LOT of people who aren't actually reporters themselves but who think they know how reporters operate have this idea that all it takes to get the story is a willingness to be brazenly, shamelessly intrusive. In fact, there's a lot more to it than that. Say, for instance, you find yourself after hours at one of the new, hard-to-pronounce

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night clubs in one of the non-nuclear-family neighborhoods because Maysles Films has invited over several hundred friends in the business for a preview screening of "*Sports Illustrated:* The Making of the Swimsuit Issue," its hot behind-the-scenes look at how the brazen, shamelessly intrusive people at *Sports Illustrated* have for the past twenty-five years celebrated the end of the professional-football season. And say that you have carried with you to this night club the assumption that dozens of swimsuit models will also be present, in their Spandex-and-fishnet work clothes. In a situation like this, if you're not merely a reporter but, by God, a *reporters'* reporter, you have to be ready for anything, even if "ready for anything" potentially means having to ask fearless, gooseflesh-inducing questions at an hour when maybe not you personally but certain reporters a lot like you are customarily at home in their jammies, drinking cocoa.

And what if you're basically a shy person? Well, if you want to be a reporter, then too bad, because, basic shyness or no basic shyness, gliding through this particular gathering of grownups involves striking a pose—a pose that says, "Hey, pal, do I look like I just fell off a turnip truck, or what?" It means making sly, oblique small talk with the coat-check girl, ambling smoothly to the bar for a soda-and-lime, and then allowing the crowd to part subtly as you make your insouciant way upstairs to the loft area, where you will sit at a table with your tall, cool drink and produce from your pocket an easy-to-palm notebook and a black Uni-ball Micro pen, the tools with which you will compose a list of resonant words and phrases: "slinky," "dark," "bevy," "gorgeous," "babes," "I think you're gonna like that," "mesh stockings," "erectile tissues," "old guys," "young guys," "girl next door," "I like the hair," "all fours," "jogging on the beach," "overt," "luminous," "crepuscular," "nice."

If, then, fate dictates that maybe only two or three bona-fide strikingly beautiful swimsuit models show up for the party and, as it happens, they're fully attired and it's too dark and crowded in the night club to get a good look at them anyway, you'll still be able to go home with some notes. Which, really, gets to the point of what it means to be a hardworking professional reporter—because even if you, too, happen to possess striking physical beauty, that doesn't free you to go emptily through the motions of taking notes and looking as if your brain were formulating an incisive question. In other words, you're always working, even though it might appear that you're just standing there or sitting there like a piece of furniture that would fit in better someplace else. You demand of yourself more than mere assumptions, you demand substance. You're always concentrating. You start with a soda-and-lime and a pen and a notebook, and pretty soon you've got a list of words. Then you watch a movie, and after it's over you can go home.

MY COUSIN MURIEL

From Manhattan, a glittering shambles
of enthrallments and futilities, of leapers
in leotards, scissoring vortices blurred,
this spring evening, by the *punto in aria*
of hybrid pear trees in bloom (no troublesome
fruit to follow) my own eyes are drawn to—
childless spinner of metaphor, in touch
by way of switchboard and satellite, for
the last time ever, with my cousin Muriel:

mother of four, worn down by arthritis,
her kidneys wasting, alone in a hospital
somewhere in California: in that worn voice,
the redhead's sassy timbre eroded from it,
while the unspeakable stirs like a stone,
a strange half-absence and a tone of weakness
(Wordsworth's discharged soldier comes to mind)
as she inquires, fatigued past irony, "How's
your work going?" As for what was hers—

nursing-home steam-table clamor, scummed
soup fat, scrubbed tubers, bones, knives,
viscera, cooking odors lived with till
they live with you, a settlement in the
olfactory tissue—well, it's my function
to imagine scenes, try for connections
as I'm trying now: a grope for words,
the numb, all but immobilized trajectory
to where my cousin, whom I've seen just once

since she went there to live, lies dying:
part of the long-drawn larger movement
that lured the Reverend Charles Wadsworth
to San Francisco, followed in imagination
from the cupola of the shuttered homestead
in Amherst where a childless recluse,
on a spring evening a century ago, A.D.
(so to speak) 1886, would cease to breathe
the air of rural Protestant New England—

an atmosphere and a condition which,
by stages, wagon trains, tent meetings,
the Revival, infused the hinterland
my cousin Muriel and I both hailed from:
a farmhouse childhood, kerosene-lit,
tatting-and-mahogany genteel. "You
were the smart one," she'd later say.
Arrant I no doubt was; as for imagining
scenes, it must be she'd forgotten

the melodramas she once improvised above
the dolls' tea table: "For the pity's sake!
How could you get us all in such a fix?
Well, I s'pose we'll just have to make
the best of it"—the whole trajectory of
being female, while I played the dullard,
presaged. She bloomed, knew how to flirt,
acquired admirers. I didn't. In what I now
recall as a last teen-age heart-to-heart,

I'm saying I don't plan on getting married.
"Not ever?" "Not ever"—then, craven, "Oh,
I'd like to be *engaged*." Which is what she
would have been, by then, to Dorwin Voss,
whom I'd been sweet on in fifth grade (last
painless crush before the crash of puberty)—
blue-eyed, black-haired, good-looking Dorwin,
who'd later walk out on her and their kids,
moving on again, part of the larger exodus

from the evangel-haunted prairie hinterland.
Some stayed; the more intemperate of us
headed East—a Village basement, uptown
lunch hours, vertiginous delusions of
autonomy, the bar crowd; waiting for
some well-heeled dullard of a male to
deign to phone, or for a stumbling-
drunk, two-timing spouse's key to turn
the small-hour dark into another fracas—

others for California: the lettuce fields,
Knott's Berry Farm, the studios; palms,
slums, sprinklers, canyon landslides,
fuchsia hedges hung with hummingbirds,
the condominium's kempt squalor: whatever
Charles Wadsworth, out there, foresaw
as consolation for anyone at all—attached,
estranged, or merely marking time—little
is left, these days, these times, to say

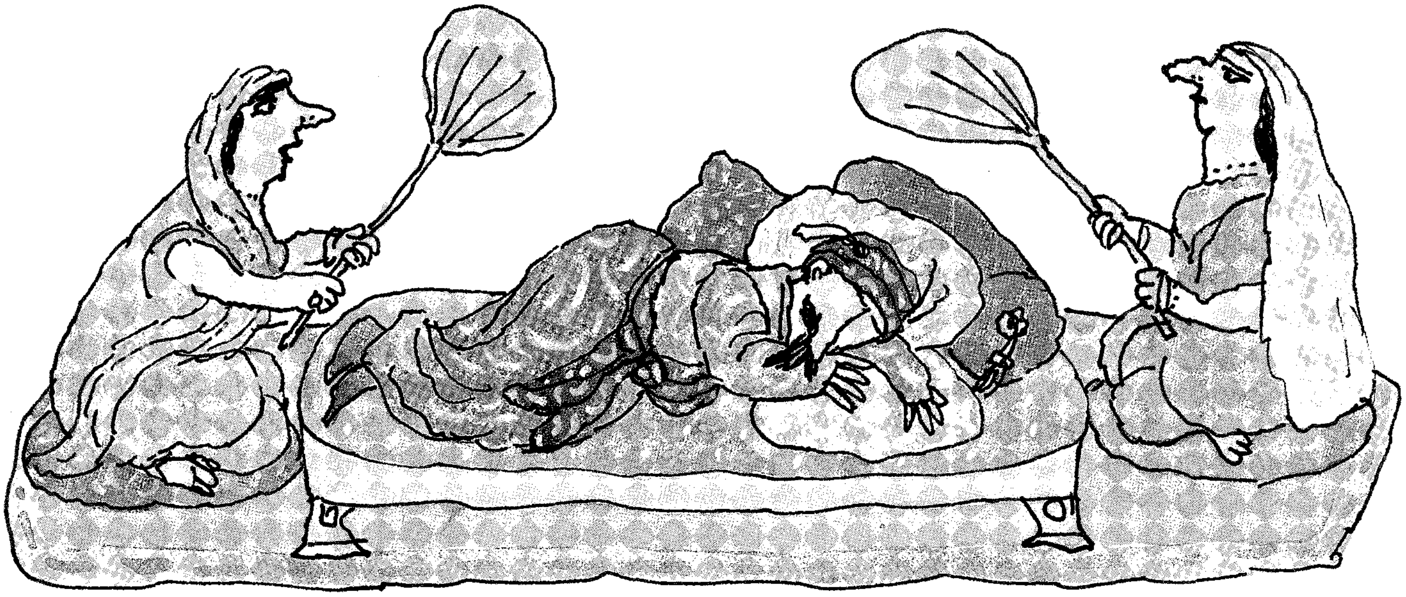
when the unspeakable stirs like a stone.
Pulled threads, the shared fabric of a
summer memory: the state-fair campground,
pump water, morning light through tent flaps,
the promenade among the booths: blue-ribbon
zinnias and baby beeves, the cooled marvel
of a cow, life-size, carved out of butter;
a gypsy congeries without a shadow on it
but the domed torpor of the capitol

ballooning, ill at ease, egregious
souvenir of pomp among the cornfields;
Kewpie-doll lowlife along the midway,
the bleachers after dark, where, sick
with mirth, under the wanton stars,
for the ineptitude of clowns, we soared
in arabesques of phosphorus, and saw—
O dread and wonder, O initiating taste
of ecstasy—a man shot from a cannon.

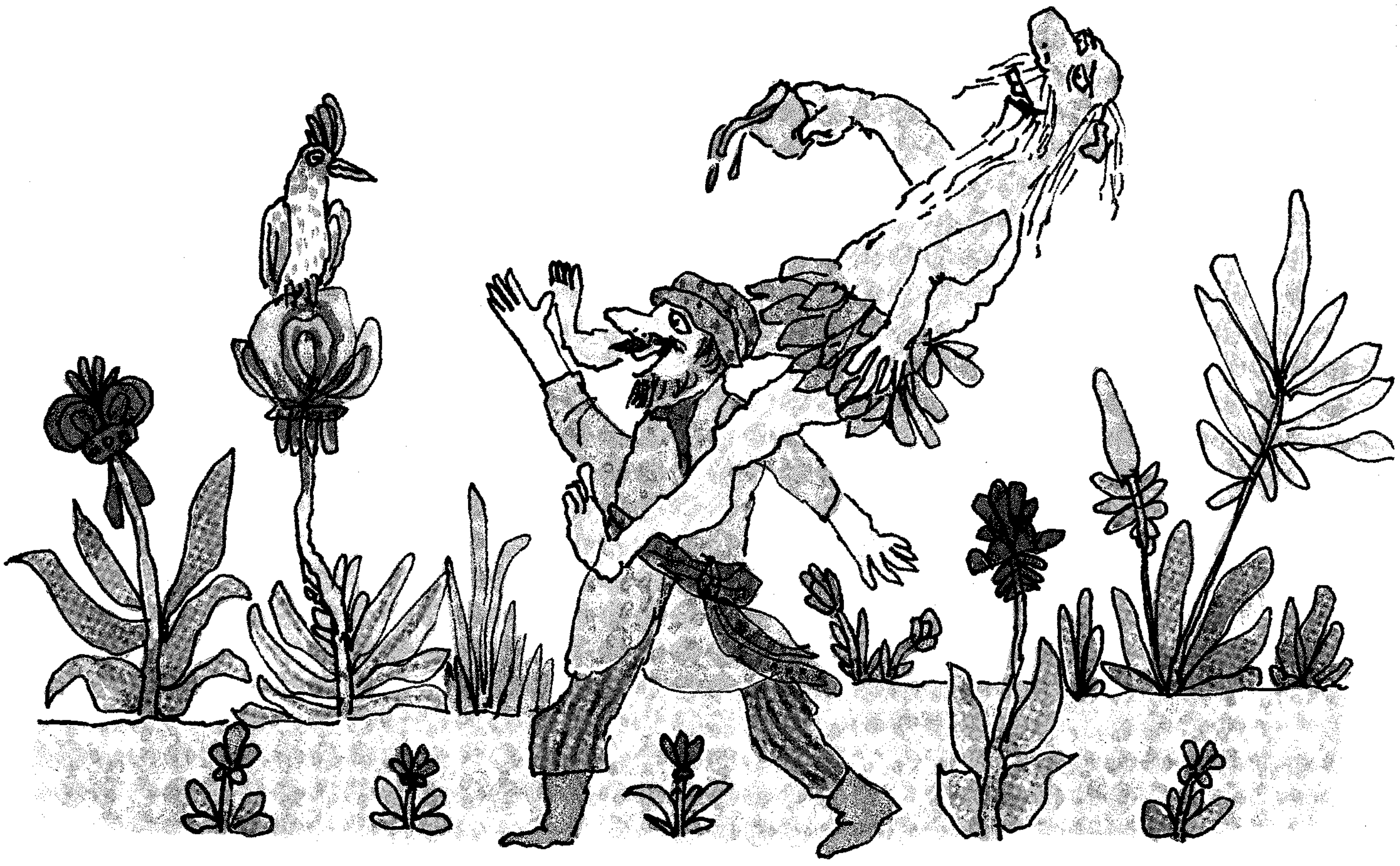
Too young then to know how much we knew
already of experience, how little of
its wider paradigm, enthralled by that
punto in aria of sheer excitement, we who
are neither leaf nor bole—O hybrid
pear tree, cloned fruitless blossomer!—
suspend, uprooted from the hinterland,
this last gray filament across a continent
where the unspeakable stirs like a stone.

—Amy Clampitt

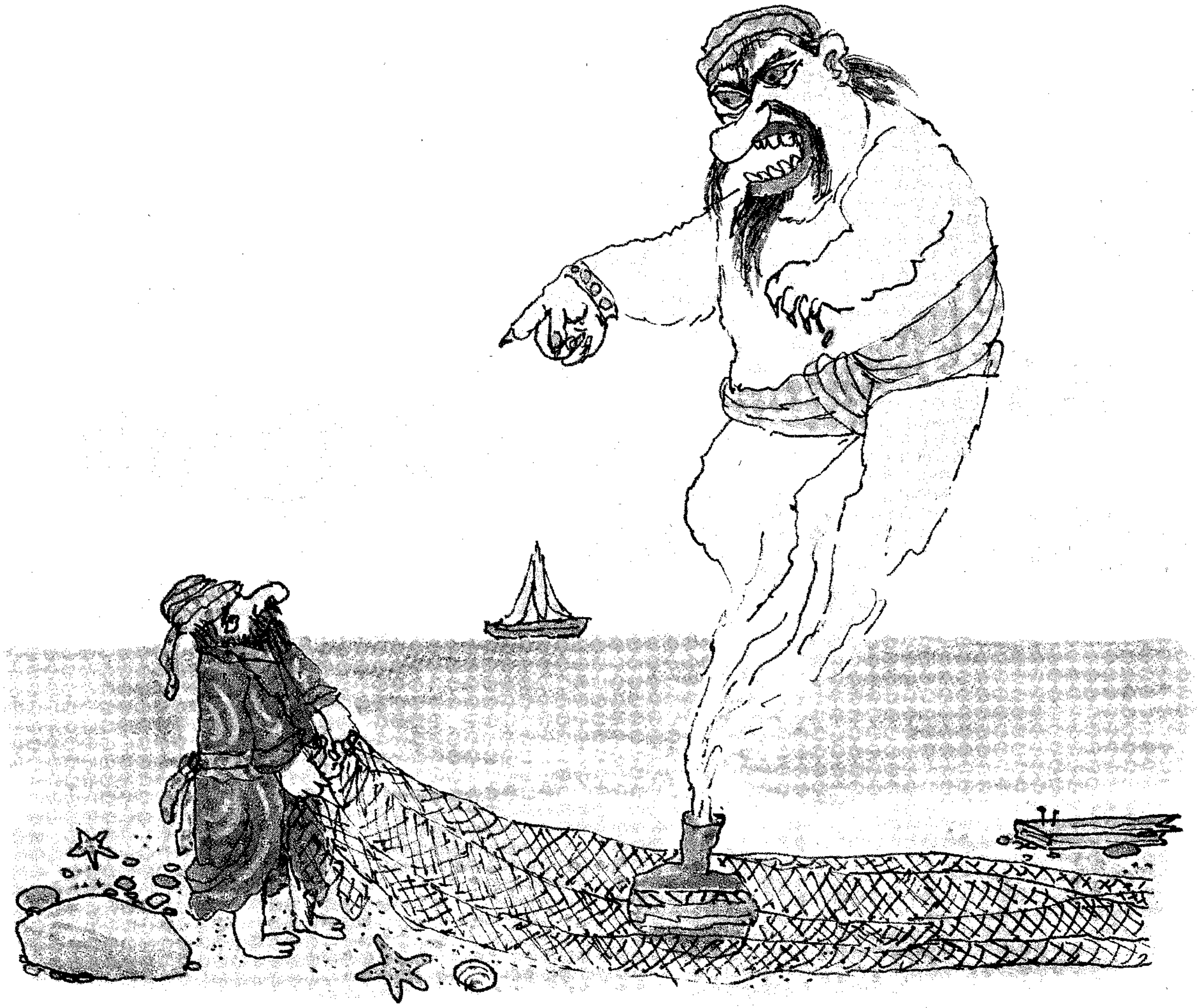
SCENES FROM THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS



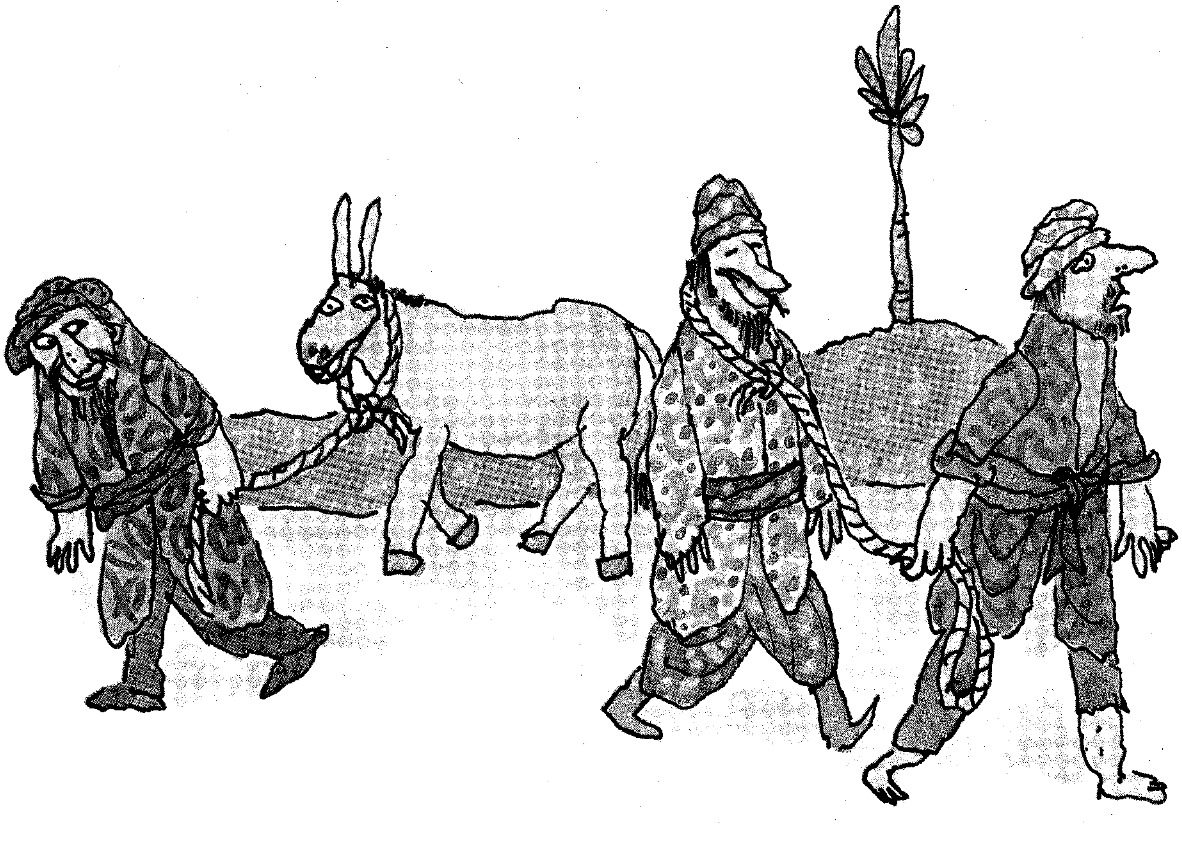
Pretending to be asleep, King Massoudah overhears talk about his wife's infidelity.



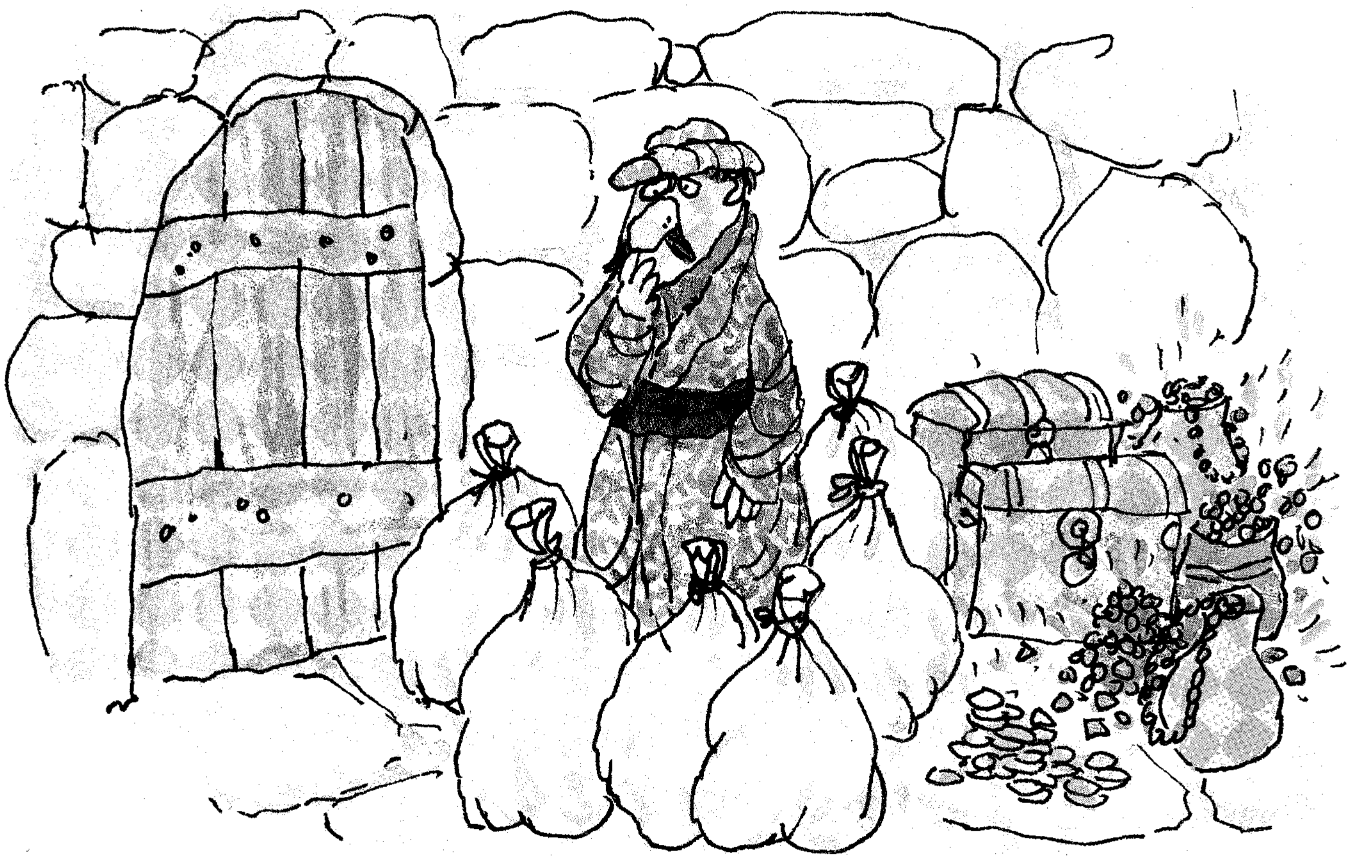
The old man gets tipsy and relaxes his grip on Sindbad.



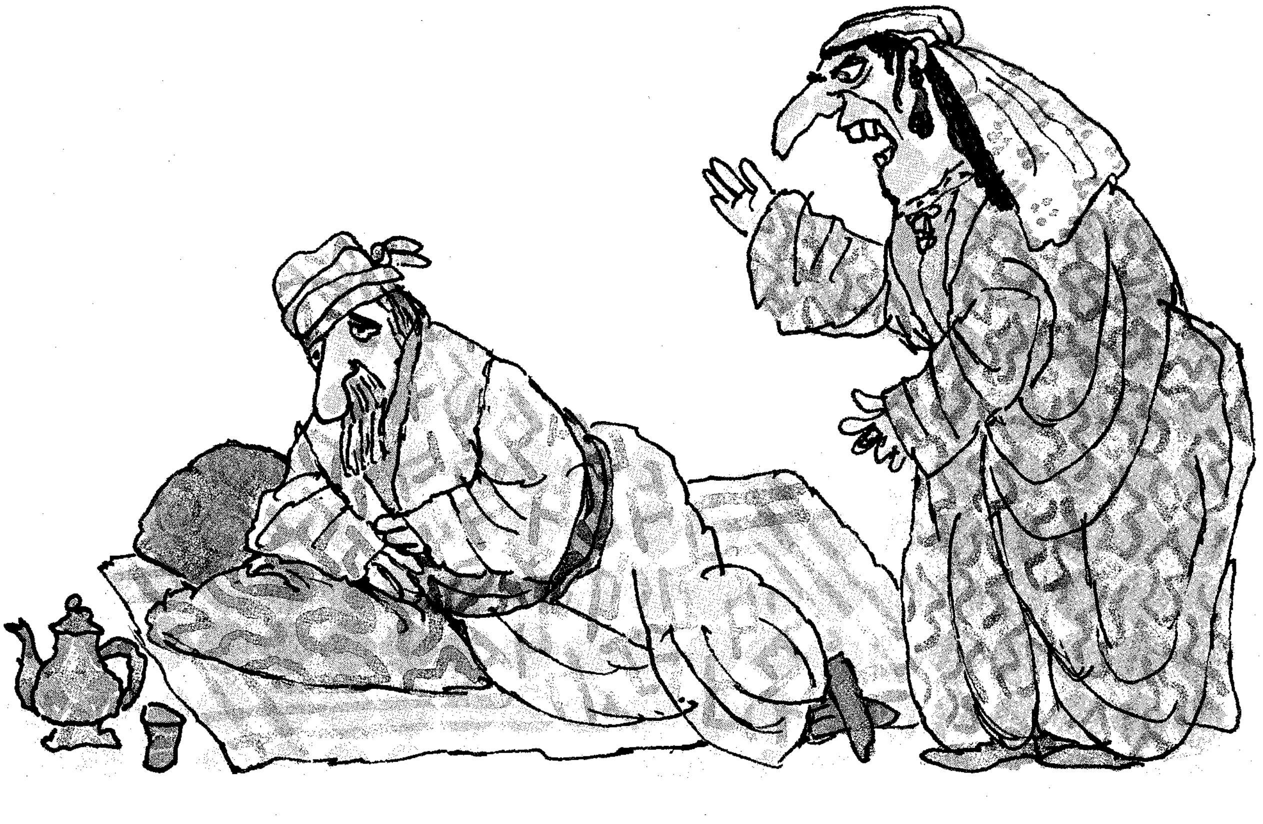
"You have freed me," says the jinnee. "Therefore you must die."



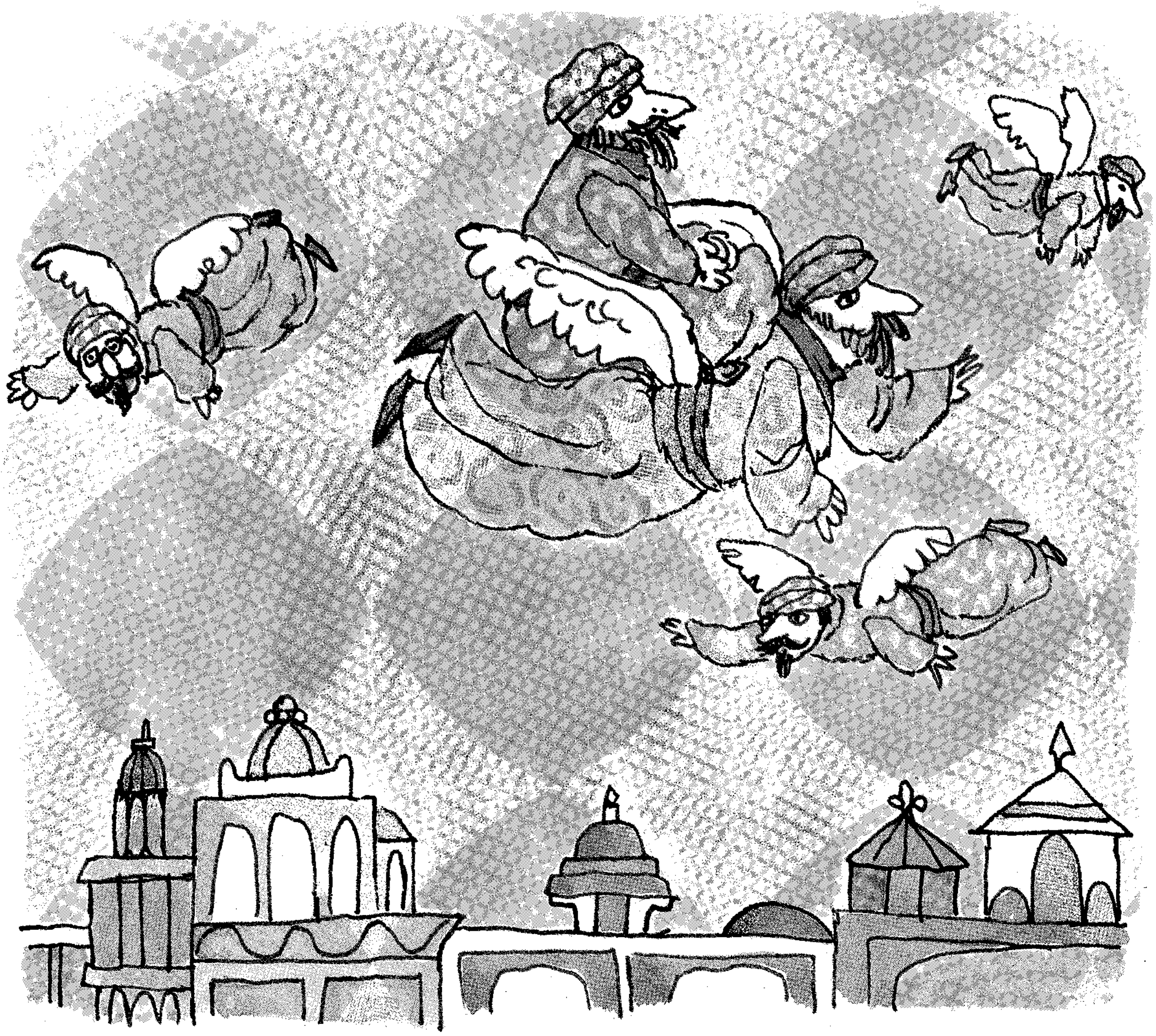
Two thieves conspire to steal the simpleton's donkey.



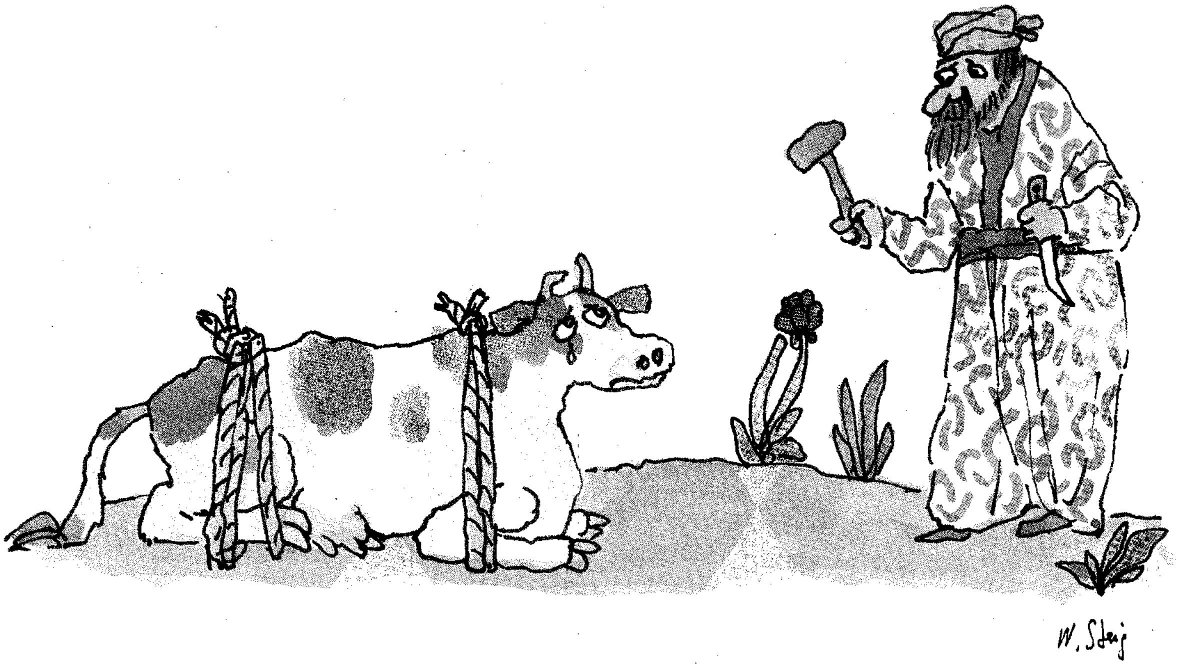
Ali Baba's brother, Cassim, forgets the magic word and is locked in the cavern.



Ma'aruf, the poor cobbler, is tormented by Fatimah, his shrewish wife.



Sindbad is carried into the sky on the one day that the men of a certain land have wings.



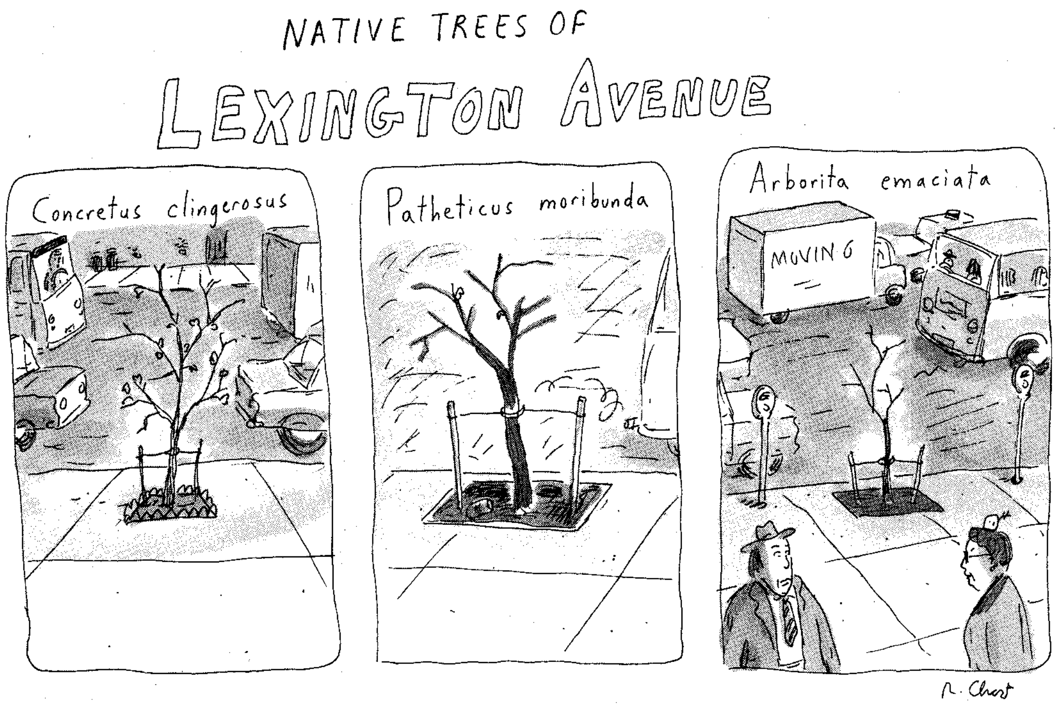
About to be sacrificed, the cow cries and touches the merchant's heart.

UNE VIE DE CHÂTEAU

MY father is straining at his watch chain. He is walking up and down beside the waiting carriage. I am in the back seat with two of the dogs, ready and kicking. (I want to sit on the box with the coachman, but *he* won't let me. He is my father. He says it isn't safe.) We are to drive to Freiburg—or Basel—for the day. My mother has not appeared yet. She is late. This is supposed to be terribly bad for the horses. People are being sent in and out of the house. My father is not angry, he is anxious; we are all anxious. This goes on. One dog jumps down, the other follows; they are lifted back. I pray for it to be over. My father pulls out his watch again. He calls; she doesn't answer him—*she* is not anxious. This makes it worse. When she at last appears, my father notices that she doesn't carry an umbrella. He says, *One always needs an umbrella*. Someone goes into the house for one. He says we won't be able to do what we planned to do—the journey is ruined, the day is ruined. His voice is very unhappy, but convinced. I pray again. Then it is discovered that I have no gloves. (I left them behind on purpose.) That child, they say. More minutes. My father acts out despair. When we *are* off, the relief is great. Of the ensuing journey—the day at Freiburg, or Basel—I have no recollection.

The locality of that scene was a southern corner of Germany, what was then, in 1914, the Grand Duchy of Baden. The house was walking minutes from the French border, a longish carriage ride from the Swiss. When the war began that summer (I was three), my father, who was too old for war and against it, said that we must all take refuge with his parents-in-law in Berlin. My mother pooh-poohed his fears, and we stayed put till next spring. She, too, was against war, and talked about it. My father did not. He had been brought up to regard Prussia as a barbarous menace and united Germany a new nonsense. He never changed his ideas. Besides, he loved France, where he had spent a large part of his life, and whenever he had the faintest chance of being understood he spoke French. His was the catastrophic view of events—the war was a dangerous folly bringing ruin to all concerned. To my mother it was a matter of people; men and women, she said—what they were capable of doing, doing to one another. She used words like "maiming" and "killing." Most of our servants came from the village and talk about our attitudes seeped out. We went on speaking French and English. One day a stone was flung over the park wall when Nanny and my half sister and I were playing. It hit me on the forehead—just a gash, but there was a lot of blood and I howled. I still have the scar, a small one, under an eyebrow. It was nothing, yet the memory worked on.

In 1915, our house was shut for the duration and we travelled across the length of Germany to Berlin. It is my first memory of a train journey. I had been told that I might see "the wounded." Long gray iron trains, the compartments jammed with people all the way, long long waits in gray steel-vaulted stations, soldiers on the platforms, in the corridors, looking in through windows, soldiers being helped into the compartment—soldiers on crutches, soldiers with head bandages, soldiers with great casts about their chests. It was impossible not to see them; that memory, too, has not ceased working on. My father's parents-in-law, who took us in, were not my mother's parents but those of his first wife, who had died young. It had not occurred to them not to go on treating him as their son-in-law. They were rich, capable of affection, and preposterously limited in their outlook. My father, who was rather nearer to them in age than he was to his second wife, my mother, had been and still was extremely good-looking—*le beau Max* they had called him in his day in the Parisian demimonde, and one of his laments was the loss of youth. He could not stand clever women. (My mother had been too beautiful for him to notice that she was one, and when he did notice it was too late.) The Berlin in-laws were the heads of a Jewish family—Edwardian Jewish—called Merz. Their house was in Voss Strasse; its back gave onto the Imperial Chancellery, in Wilhelm Strasse, and the whole block was destroyed in the Second World War. It was a large, dark house, over-upholstered and over-heated; the inhabitants never stopped eating. Some were exceedingly kind, some were critical of our presence. I was a guest on an upper floor leading my own life: I could read by then. I was the only child in the house.



(My half sister, their real grandchild, was fifteen.) Dinners were family dinners, and the number at table happened to be fourteen; whenever someone fell out I was summoned to eat downstairs to prevent there being thirteen. I was caressed, made the target of sarcastic remarks by uncles and cousins; for the rest, they saw to my plate and forgot that I might be alive. I was put either next to Grandmama Merz or at the end of the table; everyone spoke freely in his or her own way, and so I imbibed quite a deal of German-Jewish family life, if of a particular kind.

Christmas: Celebrated on the twenty-fourth, on Christmas Eve, in the white-and-gold ballroom, the one room in Voss Strasse that was not darkest mahogany. For the rest of the year it was shut up, had been so since the two daughters died, decades ago, of t.b.—my father's first wife and her sister, young women in their twenties, one following the other. Now the chandelier is unshrouded, there is a tree up to the ceiling, ablaze with *electric* candles. (This, both my father and mother said, was vulgar.) Along the walls are long trestle tables with damask cloths to the floor, and on table after table there are presents, not wrapped but displayed like things in shopwindows. Every member of the household has his own length of table, and in the middle of each place there is a plate heaped with homemade cakes, marzipan animals, bright apples, gilt nuts. The servants—the butler, who rules us all, Cook, the maids, who have grown old in the house—and some of the cousins also receive money, and the money, too, is not wrapped but stands among the stockings and the cigars in small stacks of gold that outshine the walnuts. When I see Christmas Eve, it is always that first minute when we stand and admire in silence. (I don't remember any singing; no one in Voss Strasse was able to carry a tune.) My father was not given a plate of sweetmeats; he had a small basket in which nested some coal, only the coal was truffles. I still have their scent in my nostrils.

I met no children, except for one thin, stiff boy who was already a cadet, the son of an Army widow who came to read the newspaper to Grandpapa Merz after his nap. This boy was brought to tea during his holidays; how he endured these visits—to a girl, at least five years his junior—I do not know. I had a rocking horse and a toy railway and a toy stable (Merz presents), and we played politely enough. He died in 1918, we heard, of undernourishment and the Spanish flu.

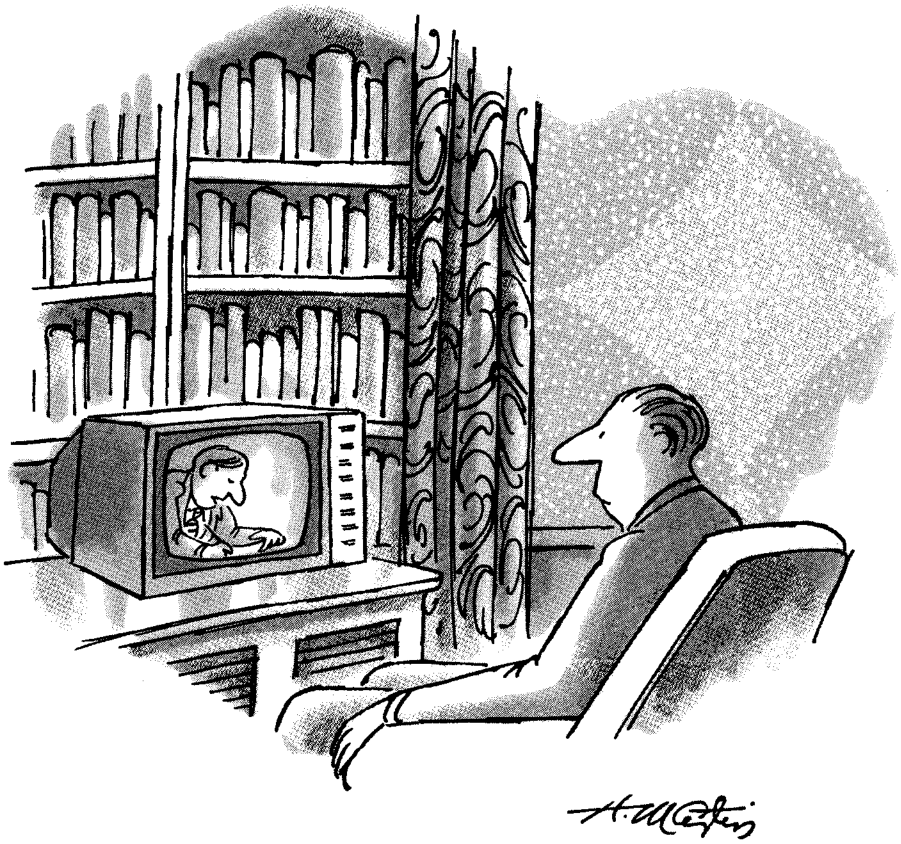
"Frankly, I'm looking for something that might appeal to a jury."

There was also a charming young man—not in uniform—who used to come to see me upstairs. For a time he was my half sister's fiancé, the one my mother approved of. (He vanished.)

Of what went on outside our hothouse I had no idea; of Berlin I knew and saw little. I was not taken for walks in the Tiergarten, the rather dismal public park. I think that was a Merz veto upheld by my father—since their daughters' deaths they were afraid of infection. (When they travelled, which was rare, they took their own bed linen into the *wagons-lits*.) Occasionally, however, I managed to get myself taken to that great avenue nearby, the Sieges Allée, built by Kaiser Bill, with its giant marbleworks of Prussian history like an over-life-size Mme. Tussaud's. I've since been told that the sculptures of Victory Avenue—Dolls' Avenue the Berliners dubbed it—were a pile of monstrous pomposities, the apex of the Wilhelminian era's taste. (It, too, was destroyed in the Second World War.) I loved it. I would stand before each Margrave of Brandenburg or King of Prussia upon his pedestal and study his countenance and dates and those of his spouse and counsellors: the monarchs were modelled, in white marble, from toe to crest; the courtiers were mere busts. Here then was history in the round, history visible, as well as in nice order, for the statues began at one end of the avenue with remotest Brandenburg and culminated with Kaiser Wilhelm I. Sometimes I was intrigued by an appearance, sometimes by a name; my favorites were an epicene youth leaning upon his shield, Heinrich the Child, and a mysterious personage covered in chain mail, Waldemar the Bear. The Sieges Allée was a treat I cherished—sightseeing, I called it.

MY father is straining at his watch chain. It isn't because the wait is bad for the horses; we have no horses anymore, we are poor now. It is still a full-sized carriage, high but light. The shafts have been altered, and it is pulled by two donkeys—one gray, one black: Fanny and Flora. They look small; my father, like the carriage, is too tall for them. He is still beautifully dressed in his greatcoat, gloved and hatted, long whip in hand. Flora had belonged to a market gardener, but Fanny, who had come from a circus and been with us for years, does not take to the new demands; all in all, they'd both as soon wait as work. Nor is it my mother who makes us late; she has left us some months ago. So has Nanny. It must be 1919. We are back in Baden, at our place in the village of Feldkirch. The church, rustic Romanesque, is still there; our house is a *Schloss*, a small château. Inside there are flights of rooms filled with my father's collection of furniture and objets d'art. The ceilings are high, and to me all seems vast. Before the war, in my mother's time, there was a good deal of life: my sister was with us, and her French governess, and there was my mother's maid and a cook and the maids from the village, the butler (also French), the coachman and the stable boy, the gardener, and a raffish Italian who ran the electric plant. Now we are only three: my father, Lina, a slight, sinewy elderly woman from the village, and me. Lina is kind and patient and she does everything. She loves my father, strange as this seems to me; I don't mean in love, I mean sheer, goodhearted devotion. She cleans, she cooks, she airs (we do a lot of airing, because of the collection), she does the washing, chops the firewood and carries it upstairs, lights the stoves and the range, looks after the fowl and what is left of our kitchen garden (the nettles have got the rest), and, helped by me, mucks out the donkeys' stable. We are only three humans but we still have animals: the donkeys, two dogs, a cat, some sheep, always a pig, chickens and geese and a vile-tempered turkey cock. Only the prewar cow, the ornamental ducks, and the peacock have gone the way of the horses. With the animals my father, who had ceased to ask man or woman into the house, is on trusting terms. The sheep come when he calls them—wild birds come, too—the pig rubs its snout against his immaculate trousers, the geese do not hiss, and the turkey cock does not attack him. As for the donkeys, only he could have turned Fanny and Flora into a carriage pair. He loves them, they love him. He also loved me, I know now, but—this is the unhappy part—he could not show his affection, only his anxieties, his fretting, his prohibitions. Don't ride, don't climb, don't run fast: *You will fall.* And I, with some curious callousness, with the arrogance of a lively, ignorant, if intelligent, child, felt impatience with him, and contempt. He also created fear; perhaps because he was not reachable by any give-and-take of talk, perhaps because of the aura of solitariness about him. Today we might call it alienation. My father in those last years of his life must have been a deeply unhappy man. He was a man who had lost his nerve; I can only guess as to when or how. (He used to harp on his three concussions—as a young man, he rode in steeplechases.)

He was born in the eighteen-fifties, and had been brought up in a house like Feldkirch—like Feldkirch before the war. There had been brothers, country pursuits; they had been happy. One boy was sent to a cadet school, could not bear it, and made a dramatic escape, walking by night, hiding by day, making immense detours to escape recapture. He reached home half starved, half crazed. They fed him up, then sent him back. He tried to kill himself by swallowing a boxful of matches. They sent him back all the same. He did not go mad, he was not put away. In fact, he became a cavalry officer—a colonel—commander of his regiment, and in due course he married. Eccentric he must have been. Animals were his interest and he had a great way with them. Wild animals. He kept wolves and used to give them jewelled collars for Christmas, or so my father told me without turning a hair. Sapphires (were they really?) for the wolves, *not* for the wife; my father's tone indicated that this was a mistake. The wife was a beautiful young woman with a great appeal to men. My father's brother was stationed in a small garrison town called Allenstein, at the confines of East Prussia, and she is supposed to have slept with half the regiment, commissioned and noncommissioned. One



"An unprecedented blizzard has buried the Eastern Seaboard under one hundred and fifty-eight inches of snow. That's, let's see . . . twelve into fifteen goes once, two from five is three, bring down the eight, twelve into thirty-eight goes three times with two left over . . ."

Christmas night (1908 or '09), a captain came to dinner; afterward he pretended to leave and instead hid in the drive. When the house was in darkness, he crept back. He had put thick socks over his shoes and he had a revolver in his pocket. My father's brother called out, "Who's there?" and turned on a light, then stood in that light, and the captain shot at him and killed him. In prison, he wrote a confession saying that he had been madly in love with the colonel's wife—Antonia was her name—and that she had made him do it. She had given him the woollen socks—her husband's socks—and a key. The captain hanged himself in his cell before the trial. Antonia was arrested and tried for murder; she was sentenced to death. A psychiatric expert managed to get her certified and she was not executed—which, according to German law, would have been by the axe—but confined instead in a mental institution. From that she was released, through the psychiatrist's efforts, within weeks. They went to Italy and got married. The Allenstein murder was a national sensation—the goings on in one of the Kaiser's regiments, the murder of the colonel by a brother officer and his own wife, Christmas night, the socks, the wolves, the suicide in prison, the beauty of the woman and her getting off scot-free. Some people got extremely angry. (My father was just bewildered and appalled.) The scandal was remarkable for the variety of ill-natured emotions it aroused; it even excited more anti-Semitism. My father's first marriage to a deceased Jewish heiress was dragged in, and the poor Merzes with it. At the time of the murder, my mother was engaged to my father but beginning to have second thoughts. He, being susceptible to beauty and vitality, fell in love with her and was single-minded in pursuit; she, caught up in this pursuit, became affectionately amused by him and his archaisms, was tempted by the offered leap into entire change. Through this, she believed, she might survive the heartbreak and stalemate of a previous attachment that had come to an end. (The man was long married and too honorable to abandon a wife older than himself, my mother concurring in that decision.) She was about to doubt the wisdom of her engagement when my father's brother was shot, and she found it no longer permissible to back out. They were married in 1910. Some people found it amusing to ask when being introduced to her, "The murderess?"—whose name, of course, she bore now. Eventually, she took my father away and they lived in Spain for a time. My impending birth put an end to that. They went back and bought Feldkirch. I owe my existence to the Allenstein affair.

"Honey, I don't want to hide anything from you. I collect pictures of cats in my spare time."

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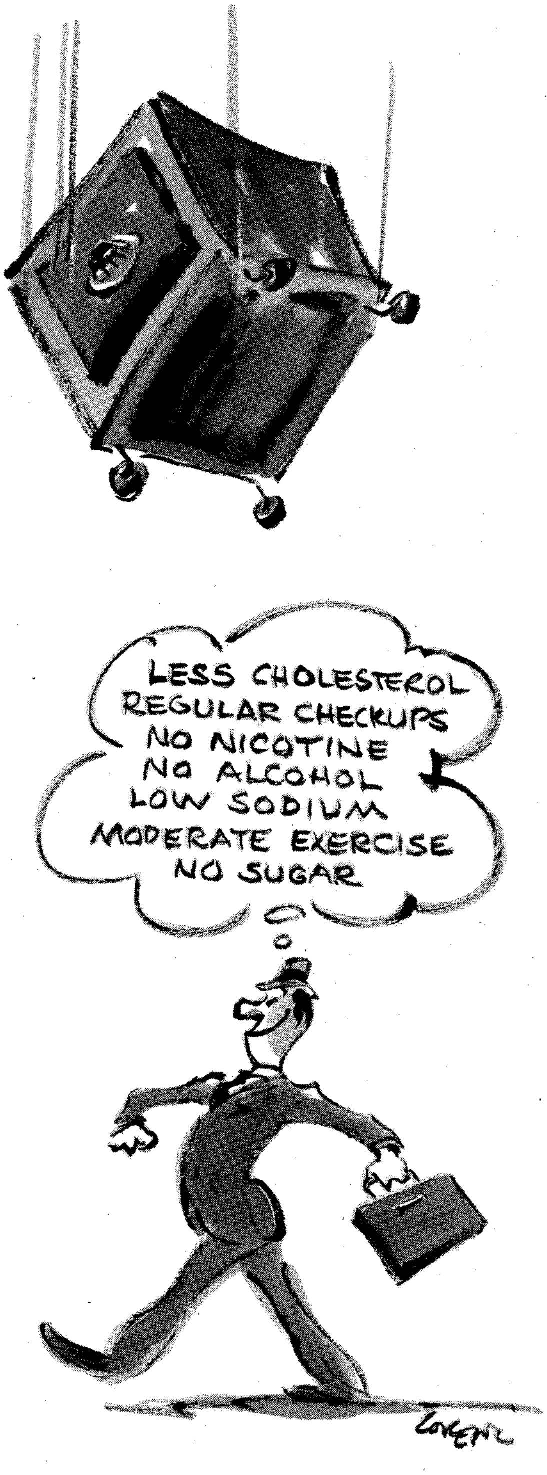
I AM trying to climb over a wall. It is the wall that encloses the garden and parkland at Feldkirch. It is high, but there are a few footholds. I fail the first time, the second. I am seen; it's the village postman. What am I up to? Oh, exercising, training my muscles—glib lies. It was training, all right, training to get over that wall, over that wall and out.

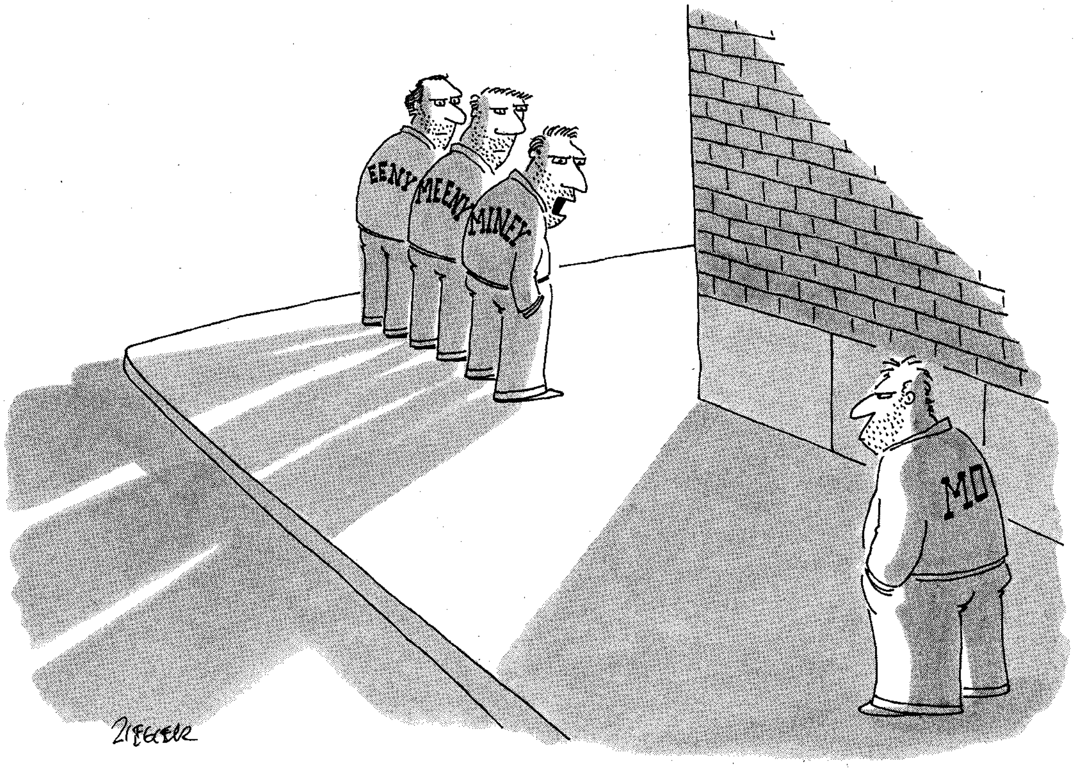
In the long run, the not so long run, my mother had been right—the marriage could not last, it did not last. So now my father and I were living alone at Feldkirch, and he was divorcing her. This I was not supposed to know. We did not speak of her. During the early weeks of the new life, I was beset by a heavy feeling that seemed to come from inside myself and that I could do nothing about. It was there every morning. I could not eat much at table, and as this upset my father it did not help the unease between us. I would run round the park three times before meals, but found that it made no difference. Let no one think that I was missing my mother. I was interested—and influenced—by my mother's general opinions, but dreaded being alone with her. She could be ironical and often impatient; she did not suffer little fools gladly. That I was her own made not a scrap of difference. When I was slow she called me slow, when I was quick she called me a parrot. Compassionate in her principles, she was high-handed, even harsh, in her daily dealings. Between her and my father there had come much open ill feeling—scenes, verbally violent, and these had shaken me. So in my early years I was afraid of my mother, more afraid of her, and in a different way, than I was of my father. He, too, had taken against her, now that she was gone; it came out not in what he said—he said little—but in what he did not say.

The one person I loved outright then was my half sister. They shook their heads over her, because she was fond of dancing and flirting and clothes, and got into debt as a girl (in spite of a large Merz allowance). Suddenly she had dropped all her young men and insisted, still underage, on marrying a man in his late forties. She was warm, generous, pleasure-loving; oddly enough, she had taken to me like a mother when I was born (she must have been all of twelve). *She* made no scenes, though she saw that I behaved. With her I felt no constraint.

When the sadness had gone on for some time, a plan came to me and I felt the better for it at once. I would escape. I would run away to my sister. She was living in Wiesbaden then, a spa where her new husband was deputy mayor. I had money, having hung on to a large tip one of my mother's admirers had given me in Voss Strasse days. I did not know how far it would go; I had been told that it might stretch to a bicycle. The main problem was to get out of our place. The gates were locked, the downstairs windows were barred, everything was heavily locked up at night—front door, side doors, windows, and back door—with great grinding Gothic keys and heavy bars and bolts. The kitchen door had the most modern lock and it was oiled; some secret daytime practice and I learned to turn it noiselessly. The right time to escape would be just before first light. It was spring, and first light came very early. This proved a new difficulty: I did not wake up in time. I tried not to go to sleep at all, but when I remained sitting up I expected icy hands to touch me through the bars of the brass bedstead (the house, we all believed, was haunted), and when I lay down I dropped off. Dawn after dawn was wasted. Then one morning I did wake up. I put on a cotton frock and, shoes in hand, crept downstairs. The stairs were stone and did not creak. The dogs did not stir, the kitchen lock turned smoothly (I left it unlocked behind me, one of the things that appalled my father), I climbed over the wall. I then proceeded to walk, not run, at a good pace. I passed a man who knew us on his way to the fields and called out, "Off for an early stroll!" (That, too, was held against me.) I carried a purse and a book, a book about Red Indians, and nothing else. I'd taken no food, not even a crust. When, after an hour or so, I got to the railway station, I went straight in and asked for a single ticket, half-fare, fourth-class to Frankfurt. There really was a fourth class in those days. The half-fare, drawing attention to my age, was not the best of moves. I said Frankfurt instead of Wiesbaden partly because I did not know how my money would hold out, partly to cover my tracks. I was given the ticket and some change and no questions asked. I first took a local to Freiburg, then changed to another slow train to Karlsruhe. Only the slow ones had fourth class, and the German name for these trains that stopped everywhere was *Bummelzug*. At Karlsruhe I changed again. I don't remember my route after that, only that there were more changes. I read my book; I felt no hunger, and I felt quite calm. I was resolved to get there—one step after another—and behaved, and therefore probably looked, as if travelling as an unaccompanied child were the most natural thing in the world. Of course, fellow-passengers and conductors were trying to ply me with questions and offers of sandwiches and sweets. I warded them off by saying that I was on my way to visit relatives (my luggage following) and plunging back into my book. The sandwiches I refused. To the pursuit that might be—that *was*—going on, I gave little intelligent thought.



My absence had in fact been noticed early, and by midmorning the police were after me. I had been reported by the man who had seen me on his way to work and by the ticket clerk at the first station. Why I was not caught I do not understand; perhaps it had something to do with my taking so many *Bummelzugs* and sometimes the wrong one. In any case, I must have been incredibly lucky. When we pulled into Wiesbaden, it was midafternoon; no hand was clapped on my shoulder. I asked my way through the town, and after a longish walk rang the bell at my brother-in-law's house. I had not met him before. In my plan I had never gone farther than the point of arrival. I found my sister away from home and the house in an uproar. There had been telegrams about me. My new brother-in-law, a middle-aged man with a bald head, was at a loss to account for my presence; nor did I, now that the moment had come, find anything to explain. He started to question me. I'd felt lonely, I said; I wanted to see my sister. To this I stuck. It seemed hours again before they got hold of her—she was playing in some tennis tournament—and brought her home and I was able to fling myself into her arms.



"Well? Are you with us?"

They were puzzled, they were kind, they did not try too hard to understand; I was not punished. My sister tried to bring some of the enormity of my conduct home to me—my poor father, the anguish I had caused him. I closed my mind. My future was not discussed, or so it seemed. Perhaps I was closing my mind to that, too. At any rate, I was not shipped back at once; day after day slipped by and still there I was.

And where was I? Once more admitted willy-nilly into an adult world. Wiesbaden town and spa must have been fairly unique in the Germany of that postwar period: it was flourishing. There was work, there was food in the shops. Life and money were kept flowing by the occupying French and more fantastically by White Russian émigrés, grandee refugees at their first stage, with jewels to sell still in their baggage, before they turned to Paris and to driving taxis. My sister's husband, whose mother had been English, was on excellent terms with the occupying forces, and said to be discreetly plotting for a separation of the Rhineland. (For this he paid dearly twenty years on: the Nazis executed him.) He was a man with much musical knowledge and a flair for the theatre: *les spectacles*. As deputy mayor, his functions included the administration of the state opera, the ballet, and the fireworks. At home he kept open house to three categories of guests, and to these only: senior French officials, Russian émigrés, singers and musicians. Every evening they came. His hospitality and connoisseurship, my sister's youth, vitality, and chic. (That marriage did not last, either.) Although a bedtime was supposed to exist for me, I saw a good deal of it all. I was dazzled. For the first time I heard Brahms and Schubert and "Voi che sapete"; I also heard Stravinsky. (All that Voss Strasse and my father had produced between them was Caruso on the gramophone.) A young Hungarian gave me piano lessons; a huge old gentleman, a cousin of the late Czarina, gave me ices at the pâtisserie. I was allowed to go to the opera; one night I saw the fireworks. I was taken to the races, where someone kindly explained to me the workings of the tote, and let loose at the tennis club all morning. I managed to get work—ecstasy!—as ball girl on the courts.

Treats, long days of treats, because, it became clear, I was to be sent back. I had only to stay *resolute*, I told myself (like the Red Indians), then it could not happen. They could not drag me back against my will. I would tell my sister, If you don't send me back, if you let me stay with you, I'll give up the opera, the social life, the tennis; you can send me to a strict day school. That part I had pat, but I had no words for the rest—*why* not to send me back. My sister was hard to get hold of on her own; she slept late in the morning, and after that everybody streamed into her room along with the breakfast tray. Every day I promised myself to talk to her on the next. When the bad morning came, it was still unsaid. All I could do was go limp and howl. They did drag me down the drive, they did take me back. That journey was accompanied.

WE are at table at Feldkirch; we are having dinner upstairs in the room we now use in the winter that used to be called the morning room. My father sits at the head (he is carving), Lina sits on his right, the dogs are beside us, expectant. What he is carving is a smoked leg of mutton—thin curly slices, like raw ham. It is his invention, made from our sheep, killed and cured at home (we don't have money to buy ham at the grocer's). In our way, in his way, we live off the land. My father serves Lina first

REPORTS FROM THE FRONT

1.

The cows spread slow unreadable ideograms
over the uneven green pad of grass. Wind
across the broken fields shakes the fuchsia
root and branch, rattles the ash. The sedge
shivers. Before stillness the finch gives
one last flittering spasm of captive fright.
I saved one once in this very spot, coaxing
back the heart's poor music. And now our
quick-as-a-flash cat is locked in her last
attitude—eyes glued, legs rigid, teeth
clamped on a string of blood. Nightly at
this full stop I wake in the dark with
no knowledge of where I am or how to get
back: beside me, one breathing in tongues.
At the full moon I dreamt a shining cloud
of silence settled these rackety fields
like peace; in the distance cream stone
glowed faintly, the remembered city. Someone
said we'd get there before dark—it was where
outcast and master squatted together, fingers
in one dish. When I woke the sky was on fire.

2.

Roused from that sweet domestic sleep
I find no refuge, going in circles. So I
leave the small house in its nest of
fuchsia, its garland of meadowsweet and
yellow rattle, and go downhill
past the wooden ladder listing
against a gray unfinished gable, past
the raw glimmer of Atlantic blue—a platter
of cracked light. In the shimmering
distance, the green heap of Mweelrea.
Covering old ground, the ash trees bend
one way, scalded by salt and burnt
before their time by summer storms.
I sense a phantom limb, a sting
of weather, a veiled figure stitched into
dreams, ticking over in the empty
phone box, her face averted. I know
nothing but a faint bodiless singing
or a sort of high talk I cannot hear
when the crazy door bangs on broken hinges.

—Eamon Grennan

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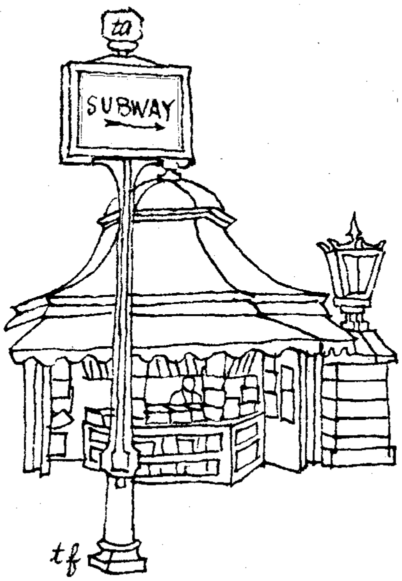
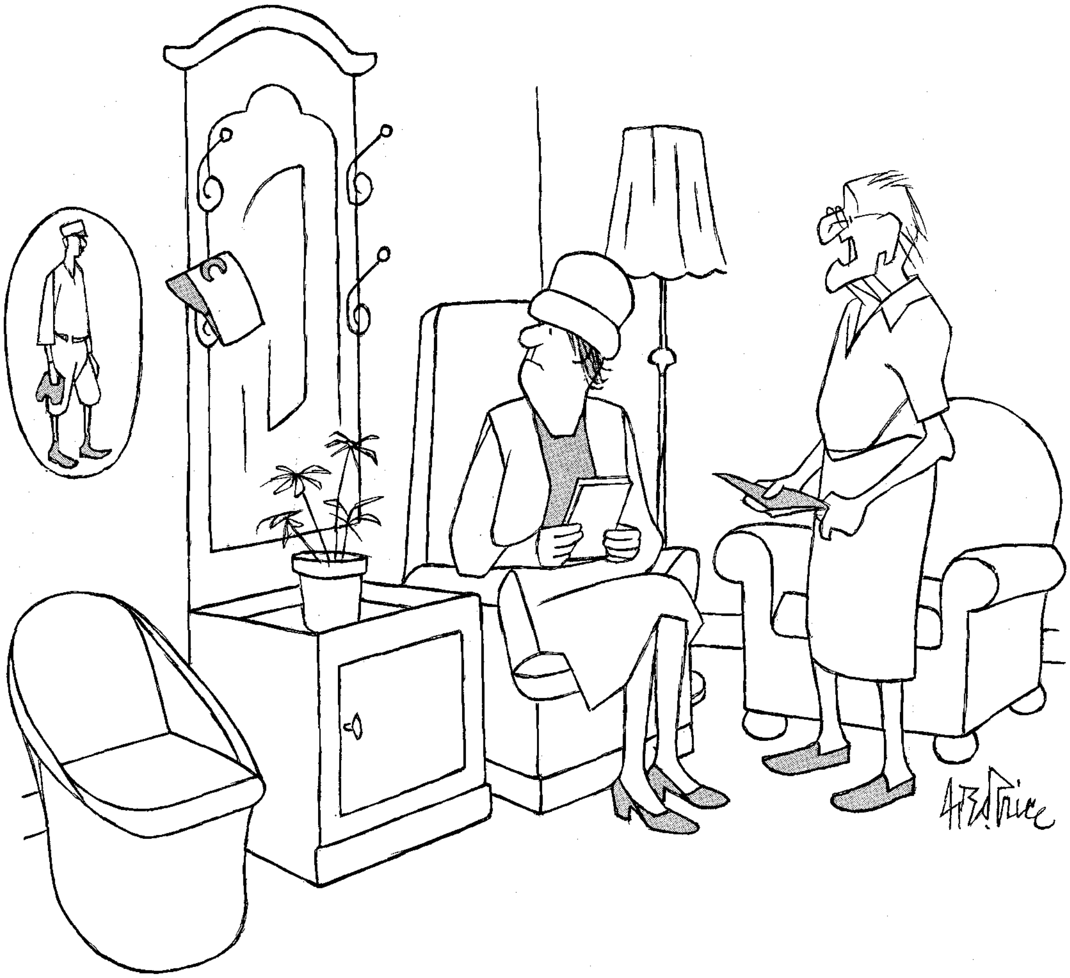
(though a good deal is whisked to the dogs), I come next. The smoked gigot is very good, even Lina admits. We also have a hot dish, some potato or flour mess of Lina's making—*Pflutten*, *Knöpfli*, *Spätzli*. Her cooking is atrocious, though my father politely directs her. He is a perfect cook, of simple things, too. He must have been well ahead of his time; he had taught himself in his youth, watched the French and Italian chefs of the eighties and nineties, sat in their scalding, commotious kitchens, made friends, drank iced champagne with them, straight swigs from the bottle (imperial pints: easier on the wrist), later simplifying, refining the dishes he had watched. Now, alas, he can no longer grill or fry, or cook anything over a range at all—ours burns wood and the fumes bring on his asthma. So he cooks by remote control or over a spirit lamp in his dressing room: exquisite egg dishes, goose liver in foaming butter. I, too, am coming on nicely; he has taught me not to overcook vegetables.

In front of each of us stands a large clear glass with a stem. My father lifts the decanter and pours precisely—each glass is one-third full. Lina is about to add water to hers and mine; my father stops her. Water in Bordeaux, *quelle horreur!* I sniff mine, take a mouthful slowly, swirling the wine in the glass, as he has told me to do. He is serious about this, as he is about anything involving ritual and skills, but he is not fussy or anxious. "Enjoy your wine," he says, and I do. At midday we drink cider—cider made in an old wooden press from apples grown in the orchard. We drink claret at night. "We don't have to worry," he says. "We have a decent amount left in the bins." He has taught me to pronounce the names on the labels and to look at the pictures of the châteaus. He has been to them, has met the owners. What shall we drink tomorrow? I am sent to fetch up the bottle. I am proud of the job, but when it's late in the day it fills me with terror—two flights down from the morning room, across the large dark hall filled with crucifixes and statues, down another flight into the cellar; in one hand I hold a candle, in the other I shall have a bottle (*bring it up gently*); I shall have no free hand to cross myself if the ghost appears. He is a bishop—Wessenberg was his name, and he is said to have done a foul deed in this very hall. Lina has taught me an incantation to use if, heaven forbid, I should see him—a German jingle: *All good ghosts praise God the Lord*. Yet crossing oneself is of the essence. When I'm safe upstairs in the lighted room with the right wine and the candle has not blown out, my father often gives me a piece of gingerbread or a few coins. Danger money. For he professes to believe in old Wessenberg, as he offhandedly calls the ghost, and claims to have found him occupying the chairs he is said to favor in the library and the Renaissance room, chairs I give a wide berth to. The dogs won't go near them; I've seen their hackles rise. Once the wine is safely up, it is stood somewhere to settle—that room's too warm, keep it well away from that stove!—and next day I am allowed to cut the seal and, unless the wine is very old, draw the cork, wipe the neck inside and out. The decanting is done by my father; my hands are not yet strong enough to do it properly.



And what do we talk about over our

wine, and later when we sit by the lighted stove, a beautiful stove made of sixteenth-century tiles? Lina does not say much. She has confided in me that eating with my father scared her desperately at first (he said it was the right thing to do in these new times, revolutionary times); now she is getting used to it. Her ambition is to end her days as housekeeper to a priest. My father makes conversation as though Lina and I were real ladies. He tells us stories: about his youth, about Paris, about Monte Carlo and ways of breaking the bank. "And did you?" "Oh no! But one *can*. Systems . . . one needs capital. . . ." He tells us about the pair of chimpanzees he kept as a young man, first on Corsica, then at his villa at Grasse, where they used to rush out in the morning to feast on the neighbors' peach trees. When he married, the Merzes made him give up his monkeys—dirty apes, unhygienic—"though, you see, they were actually very soigné." He tells us about the time he spent with a group of mesmerists in a castle in central France which belonged to a Polish count, a queer fellow, who claimed that he could raise the dead.



"He was a mean old bastard, but I look at that asinine cap of his and I'm all shook up."

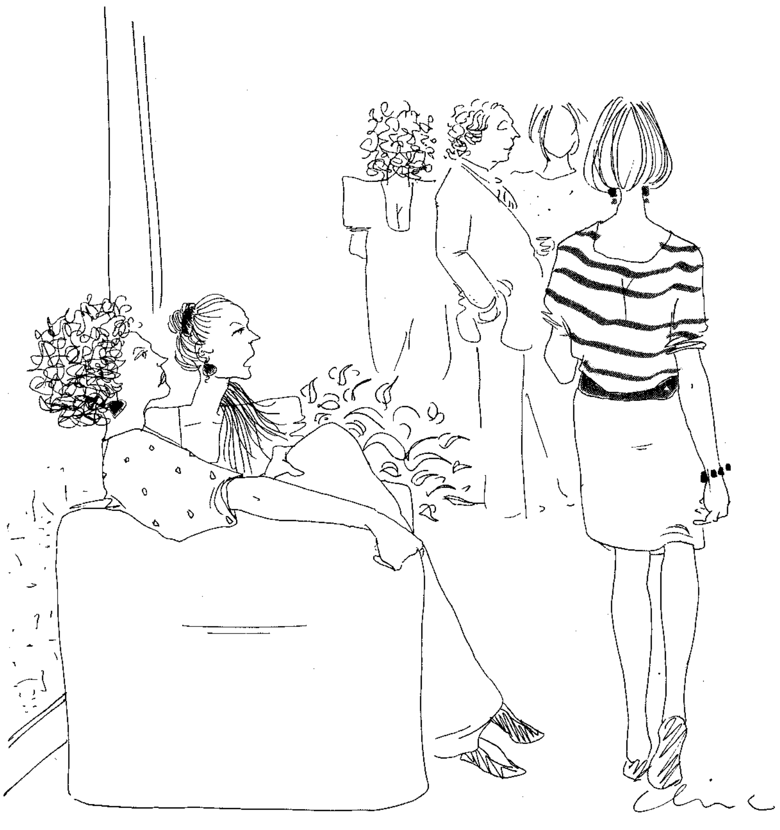
• •

If my father was not good at showing affection, neither did he show hurt or reproach. When I came back after running away, Lina had scolded, kissed, and wept; my father let it pass. To me a curious thing happened: the sadness was gone, vanished; I settled down at once. I missed my sister; the interlude at her house became paradise lost, a dream. Some time again, I promised myself, there would be piano lessons and tennis; meanwhile I was resigned. Better than that, without quite realizing it I was content. My attitude to my father had not changed. I was contemptuous of his prohibitions and fears—I was sure I knew better; his minute protection of me made me rebellious, not grateful, and there was an element of mutual evasiveness in our intercourse. Yet detached as I was from him, I lived in his stories (I played with bits of wood, pretending they were the horses he had had as a boy and young man), I looked forward to our evenings (the claret helping?), and was open to the skills he taught me.

When I say that my father did not reproach me, I mean that he never spoke of my having deserted and exposed him. (My mother, inevitably hearing of the escapade, treated it as a huge joke in her letters.) He did scold me about having left the house unlocked, a prey to thieves and marauders. What with the changes brought by the end of the war and the setting up of the Weimar Republic, he saw himself surrounded by an almost entirely hostile environment. Monarchy, with its concomitants of courts and protocol, was, if dull, of the natural order of things: it was *safe*. My mother's defection did not help, nor did our poverty—our being "ruined," he called it. He felt himself betrayed by her, by his parents-in-law, by the times, by social forces he could neither understand nor name. And by me, God help me. What about that poverty of ours? Was it real? Or was it self-protection? Was it relative? I think it must have been all three, and, at any rate, very bitter for a man in his sixties who had been brought up not exactly to money but to the sweetness of life. (In a moderate, very civilized way. Not for him the Merz opulence; his taste was too good, his fastidiousness too great. In their house he held himself aloof, like a prisoner of honor at the victor's banquet.) The little money he had inherited he went through early; afterward the money came from his wives. When the first one died, the Merzes made him an allowance that continued after he married my mother. Now my mother was gone and Grandpapa Merz was dead. He had died in his nineties at Voss Strasse before the end of the war. The Merzes had been believed to be very rich, but the old man had long ceased to look after his affairs, and when he was gone there was barely enough left for Grandmama to carry on in that huge house. My father, like many other of their pensioners, was left out in the cold. He still had Feldkirch (bought by my mother) and his collection of objets d'art. To these he was enslaved, the house a necessary setting to contain them. Were they beautiful? What he was after, ever since he began as a young man to stalk the salesrooms, was craftsmanship, rarity, decorative quality, not art. He had bought few paintings, and he spurned anything made much after 1600. Here, too, he indulged a gloomy, even macabre trend: Gothic carvings, altar vessels, medieval chests, rows of pewter mugs, fifteenth-century bronzes, Renaissance chairs, fragments of tapestries. We lived inside a museum, one that nobody came to see.

How *did* we exist? Well, by barter, up to a point; and here my father, being country-bred, developed some ingenuity. For we had no land to live off, only park and lawn and courtyards and drives where the nettles stood waist high. He had some grass plowed up (a man and horse came to do that), and put in potatoes and poppies. The poppies were to make cooking oil, poppy-seed oil—Lina and I had to crack and shell the pods—and my poor father, deploring it all, sadly talked of olives. What was left of the lawn was used by sheep and geese. Our cooking and heating was done with wood from the park, and there was enough left to trade in for the donkeys' feed and the fowls', and flour for our bread. We had nearly three hundred apple trees, good strains and known to be so, both eating and cider; these, too, were traded: for milk, for cream (we churned our butter), for honey and man-hours. Every few months a butcher's assistant came out from the market town to kill a sheep or a pig. We had poultry, we had eggs, we grew vegetables, and grapes on a south wall. From these in October my father made a small quantity of fine white wine. So much for our table. My father's wardrobe—suits, greatcoats, shirts, boots—was inexhaustible; mine was not replenished. For everyday, I wore a kind of overall—trousers and apron in one—or my Red Indian outfit, a relic of Merz bounty not yet too badly outgrown. To Mass I wore one of my old dresses, and over them, as they became shorter and shorter, one of my father's jackets, Lina having adjusted the sleeves and little else. We took one paper, a local one, chiefly for the agricultural ads; that must have been paid for in cash. So must some other items—salt, soap, candles, matches—and since we were on main electricity by now, my father's mind was much exercised by future bills. The thing that cost most, he told us, was switching on, as the current had to flow in from so far. So we kept lights burning in the morning room and in my father's suite, and went about the rest of the house candle in hand. (I tried to save candles by melting and remolding the ends, but found no way of managing the wick.) I quite enjoyed playing the Robinson Crusoe game, yet in my unfeeling way I was irritated by my father's groans about money. Again, I knew so much better—he'd only have to sell some of the stuff, a few pieces from the collection, and we'd be all right again. Poor man, I fear that this is precisely what he must have done, secretly, agonizingly, in minimal installments. He would never allow a dealer to come near the place (some prowled), but there were days when, carrying a Gladstone bag and looking aloof, he drove to the station in the donkey carriage and took the train to Freiburg or Basel. He'd come back in the evening inscrutable, bearing presents for Lina and me. I am sure now that this was the way the electric bills were met and Lina's wages got paid.

My own life was full. I opened up the chicken coops in the morning and shut them again at dusk, I fed the geese and made the dogs' dinner (it was served by my father), I fanned the smokehouse fire, turned the joints of pork in their barrel of brine, drew our daily cider. There was no more slow time to dread. There was weeding to be done, and watering, and vegetables to be picked and windfalls to be gathered and kindling to be made, and I now could muck out the donkeys' stable on my own. Then there were seasonal tasks: apple picking and storing (on the parquet floor of my mother's drawing room, now empty of its light, gracious furniture), the brief vintage, the gathering and stacking of wood, the autumnal raking of leaves. The leaves were my responsibility (they were needed for the donkeys' bedding, as we could not afford to buy straw): spreading and drying and turning, then piling them into the cart and driving them to the



"That's Cheryl Chalmers. She only comes in black-and-white."

Call him off!
Call him off!!
Easy, now...
Easy, big boy!
There's gonna be a popcorn ball in this for Wren when we get back to H.Q.!!
For God's sake, have mercy!!
Shanahan

THE ADVENTURES OF WREN TIN TIN

barn, Flora between the shafts (Fanny being too tricky). I also had private pursuits. Teaching the dogs arithmetic: having heard of calculating horses, I tried to make them tap out numbers with their paws, by persuasion and rewards. That was an entire failure. Trick bicycling, on an old machine. I was seldom allowed out on the road, so I taught myself stunts in the yard. I could kneel on the saddle going downhill and I could ride backward in tight circles (*not* within sight of my father). And tennis—solo tennis by the hour with the prewar balls and the ill-strung racquet against the washhouse wall, keeping the score and dreaming of Wimbledon. (Oh, the things I had heard of.)

Perhaps I should say a word about our position, real and imaginary, in the neighborhood (as far as I can piece it together). That rural corner of Baden, the Breisach, was full of small villages like ours, and many of these had their *Schloss*, inhabited by families we knew but had ceased to see. Now they, too, felt the pinch, though none, I gathered, were retrenching in quite our way. From this world my father had made his voluntary withdrawal. He still drank a glass of wine with a farmer after trading in apples or wood, and now and again of a morning he called on the mayor's wife, who had been, he told me, a most handsome woman. Every six months or so, he asked the priest to dinner and, after days of grumbling and preparation, gave him a remarkable one. His manner was not conscious; he was gravely polite, trying to look after people regardless of their age or standing. My mother said that whenever he had been absorbed and oblivious of his many dreads, as in courtship or in stalking an objet d'art, he would become happy and animated and could show much charm. So in spite of his aloofness and his own misgivings he was personally much liked by Feldkirch. They did *not* like our new shabbiness; it deprived them of something, and they couldn't understand it—the *Schloss*, after all, was still there. They were embarrassed by the donkey carriage and my clothes, while to him it was the wise response to an age of revolution. The donkeys were the sand to my father's ostrich head. He was wrong: Feldkirch had no wish to send us to the guillotine; they missed our liveried servants.

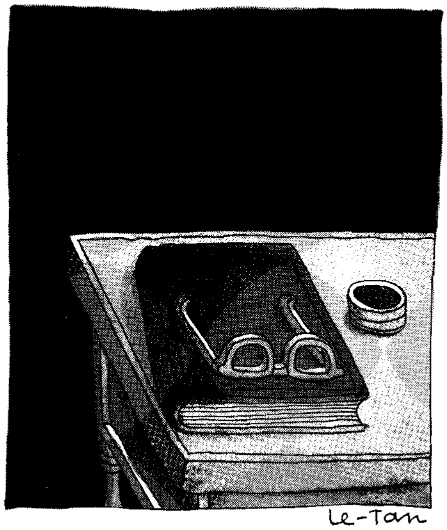
A NEW worry came to beset my father. He had my custody but my mother still meddled (his word); she wanted me to be educated, and so, apparently, did the law. In the now distant past, Nanny had taught me my pothooks, reading I had more or less picked up on my own, numbers I liked to play with. At Voss Strasse, I had quite enjoyed the visits of a rather decrepit tutor. At Feldkirch, we forgot all about education. When my mother nudged us, she suggested a governess; my father, beside himself with vexation, decided to send me to the village school.

The schoolhouse was a recent building implanted by some distant authority—a classroom on the ground floor and some lavatories, above it a flat for the schoolmaster and his family—and it smelled of cement, linoleum, and piss. Here I was brought one day in the middle of term. It was noisy but not really confusing, and I soon got the hang of it. Like my sister's house, school opened another world for me. Again I discovered the pleasures of social life. First there were the children, though they treated me with curiosity and restraint at first. (Their parents and the schoolmaster called me by the preposterous name of Baroness Billi; Billi was what my family always called me—a corruption of the last syllables of my first name.) I tried to make friends with the zest of a puppy. I was interested in their home life and pleased when my new friends took me to their houses after school. There I was hospitably received by their elders. My father, who never went out except to Mass, was not unalarmed by my involvement with the village, which he put down to the evils attending my having to go to school. He was not aware of quite how many hours I spent out of bounds, as Lina, sensibly, covered up for me. He did not mind the information I brought home about crops and calvings, but was upset by my accepting hospitality. His manners overcame his dread of anyone getting a glimpse of his collection, and it was decided that I must invite my friends. I, uncertain of the acceptability of my home, asked if we might have bacon. Bacon was not expected, Lina said; she would provide cake and lemonade. So I asked my three chums, Alphons, Robert, and Anton, to drop in after school. Lina turned red in the face, burst into tears, and appealed to my father in a hysterical voice, Please, Herr Baron, don't let her. Then it all came out: The village was talking! Parents were displeased! I had been causing scandal! Now I was about to commit the last solecism—*for a girl to play with boys was simply not done.* My father and I were stunned, indignant, embarrassed. She ought to have warned us, Lina said, spoken earlier, but she knew that Billi had meant no harm. Harm? I felt bewildered, miserable, betrayed—I had believed myself welcome, liked. . . . What had I done? What was I supposed to have done? Lina implied something unmentionable here, some threshold of adult abyss. Then my father gave it his own twist—these were times to lie low: I was wild, I was reckless, *I invited danger.* Decisions were made and unmade—I must stop going to the village, stop going to church, I must stop going to school. We had days of this; then it cooled down. I continued at school, village outings were rationed, a gaggle of girls was asked in to play. They came, good God, in their Sunday best and did not enjoy my toys (I kept no dolls); as we strolled in the park, my boy chums appeared on the wall and jeered. I could neither explain nor apologize; I survived.

My second social disaster was triggered by Lina. "Give me that comb." "I can manage all right." "Give me that comb!" I let go, it was past concealment, the teeth of the comb were teeming with live lice. *What shall we do?* Wash my hair in petrol. *He* will smell it. Papa must not know. But what if *he* should catch them? I saw *that* was unthinkable; I gave in. So my father was told the facts of life: some of my schoolfellows had lice—not all, not many. . . . My hair was fine-tooth-combed by the hour, washed in petrol day after day, before we got rid of them, nits and all. This I submitted to, but now my father put his foot down. It was the end of my school days.

Hoping to remain unbadgered by the German equivalent of the Education Act, my father decided to tutor me himself. He went to Freiburg and bought a set of schoolbooks; they were secondary-school books, and so quite a jump. There were four of these—a geography book, a history book, a German grammar, and a French grammar. My father's method was simple: every weekday I was to learn, on my own, one paragraph from each book. By learning he meant by heart; he expected me to be word perfect. So I memorized French irregular verbs, German declensions, lengths of rivers, the date of Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. It bored me, and I got into the habit of putting off the daily stint until the last hour, with some pretty narrow escapes. Once I had to fall back on reciting yesterday's lesson, and to my horror got away with it. This left me feeling mean and guilty but also rather cynical about the whole process. It had to be kept up, though, as the alternative was the threat of a resident governess, who, my father said, would ruin our lives. What he failed to take in was the unequal distribution of my daily task: the paragraph I was to learn could be anything from six lines to a page and a half.

It must have been during that period that my father initiated our nightly sessions of roulette. He produced an authentic wheel from some locked recess and set it up. He acted as bank and croupier; Lina and I were the punters, and we soon caught on. Candles, wineglasses, stacks of counters on the table, my father strict in the observance of the disciplines of Monte Carlo. *Faites vos jeux. . . . Rien ne va plus!* The wheel spinning and the hush while the tiny ball jumped—*Le Seize*, *Rouge*, *Impair et Passe.* We played for real money—Lina's wages, my pocket money—and learned to be careful. When losses became serious my father would make them up for us, but not until the next morning, in daylight, not acknowledging what his left hand was doing. At night, again we were a gambling club, dicing with thought of ruin, while my father kept up a commentary of anecdotes about young men he'd seen cry *Banco!*, lose all, and shoot themselves at dawn.



It was autumn again, some disturbance was in the air. There were letters: something was on my father's mind. One evening as we were sitting in his room side by side, he struggling for breath—as he so often did and I so used to it—he brought it out. Your mother . . . the lawyers . . . you *see.* . . . Here were the facts: My father had custody whereas my mother had access; she was supposed to have me for a couple of months a year. Nearly three years were up now; so far she had not claimed me, or my father had managed to keep her off (something of both, I believe). Now the lawyers said that she wanted me, that there was little he could do. She wanted me to spend the next half year with her in Italy. I was to start for Florence the day after tomorrow, somebody was going to meet me at Freiburg and take me there. Before I knew what I felt, I burst into loud tears. "*No*," I cried, and for the first time clung to him. My father said (I am not certain whether he said it or whether I only heard it with some inner ear), "Too late," and raised his hands in a defeated gesture. I cried more bitterly and had the grace to say—to this man who had watched over me, who had done so much for me, to whom I had never shown a loving heart—"I want to stay with you." Again he made that gesture: "But Billi—you ran away from me."

Two days later I was put on a train. A few months after this, my father came down with appendicitis. He was operated on in Freiburg. His asthma became bad; he could not breathe lying on a hospital bed. Within a few days he died. I knew that he had been much afraid of death. —Sybille Bedford

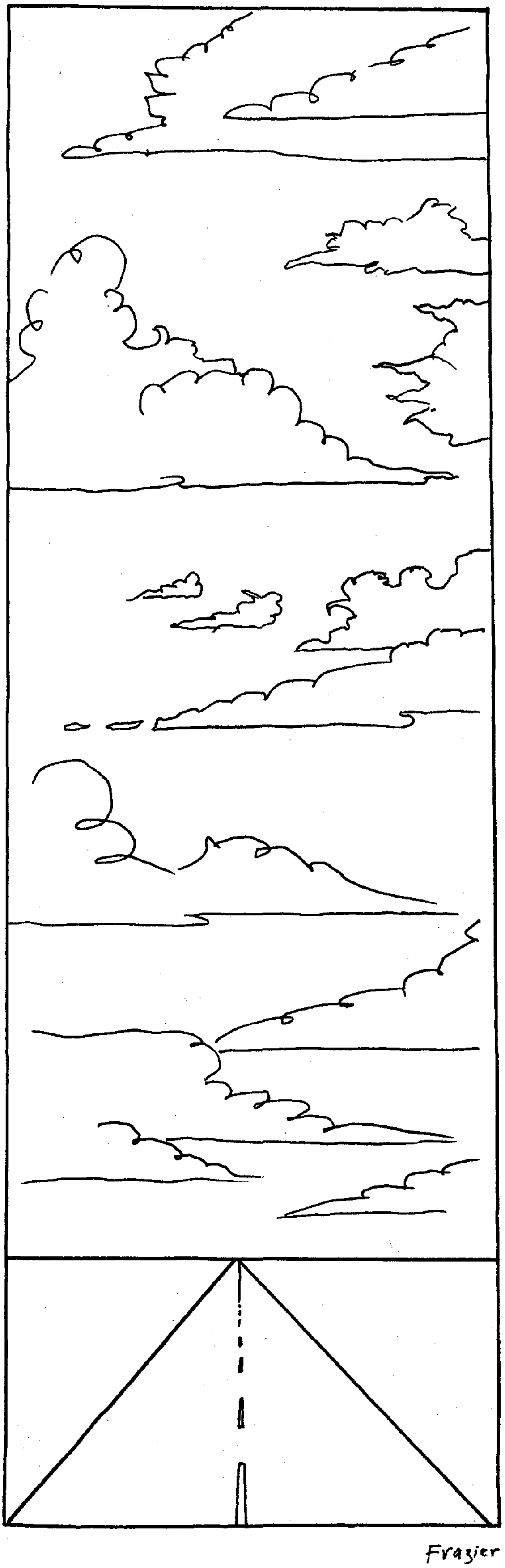
A REPORTER AT LARGE

GREAT PLAINS—I

AWAY to the Great Plains of America, to that immense Western shortgrass prairie now mostly plowed under! Away to the still empty land beyond newsstands and malls and velvet restaurant ropes! Away to the headwaters of the Missouri, now quelled by many impoundment dams, and to the headwaters of the Platte, and to the almost invisible headwaters of the slurped-up Arkansas! Away to the land where TV used to set its most popular dramas, but not anymore! Away to the land beyond the hundredth meridian of longitude, where sometimes it rains and sometimes it doesn't, where agriculture stops and does a double take! Away to the skies of sparrow hawks sitting on telephone wires, thinking of mice and flaring their tail feathers suddenly, like a card trick! Away to the airshaft of the continent, where weather fronts from two hemispheres meet and the wind blows almost all the time! Away to the fields of wheat and milo and Sudan grass and flax and alfalfa and nothing! Away to parts of Montana and North Dakota and South Dakota and Wyoming and Nebraska and Kansas and Colorado and New Mexico and Oklahoma and Texas! Away to the high plains rolling in waves to the rising final chord of the Rocky Mountains!

A discount airplane ticket from New York City to the middle of the Great Plains—to Dodge City, Kansas, say, which once called itself the Queen of the Cowtowns—costs about four hundred and twenty dollars, round trip. A discount ticket over the plains—to the mountains, to Salt Lake City, to Seattle, to Los Angeles—is much cheaper. Today, most travellers who see the plains do it from thirty thousand feet. A person who wanted to go from New York to California overland in 1849, with the Gold Rush, could take a passenger ship to Baltimore, the B. & O. Railroad to Cumberland, Maryland, a stagecoach over the Allegheny Mountains to the Monongahela River, a steamboat to Pittsburgh, another steamboat down the Ohio to the Mississippi to St. Louis, another from St. Louis up the Missouri to Independence or St. Joseph or Council Bluffs, and an ox-drawn wagon west from there. If you left the East in early April, you might be on the plains by mid-May, and across by the Fourth of July. Today, if you leave LaGuardia Airport in a 747 for Los Angeles just after breakfast, you will be over the plains by lunch. If you lean across the orthopedist from Beverly Hills who specializes in break-dancing injuries and who is in the window seat returning from his appearance on "Good Morning America," you will see that the regular squares of cropland below you have begun to falter, that the country is for great distances bare and puckered by dry watercourses, that big, green circles have begun to appear, and that often long, narrow rectangles of green alternate with equal rectangles of brown.

Chances are, nothing in the seat pocket in front of you will mention that those green circles are fields watered by central-pivot irrigation, where a wheeled span of irrigation pipe as much as a quarter mile long makes a slow circuit, like the hand of a clock. If you ask the flight attendant about those green and brown rectangles, chances are he or she will not say that in the spring of 1885 a wheat farmer on the Canadian plains named Angus Mackay was unable to plant a field that had already been plowed when his hands left to help suppress a rebellion of frontiersmen of French and Indian ancestry against the Dominion of Canada, and so he



"*I want to force some bulbs.*"

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left the field fallow, cultivating it occasionally to kill the weeds; that when he planted it the following year it weathered a drought to produce thirty-five bushels of wheat per acre, thirty-three bushels more than continuously cropped land; that the practice he had initiated, called summer fallow, was an effective way to conserve moisture in the soil in a semi-arid climate, and many other farmers adopted it; that the one problem with summer fallow was the tendency of fields with no crop cover sometimes to dry up and blow away; that in 1918 two other Canadian farmers, Leonard and Arie Koole, experimented successfully with crops planted in narrow sections at right angles to the prevailing winds, to protect sections of fallow ground in between; and that this refinement, called strip farming, turned out to be the best way to raise wheat on the northern plains.

Crossing high and fast above the plains, headed elsewhere, you are doing what rain clouds tend to do. You are in a sky that farmers have cursed and blasted with dynamite barrages and prodded with hydrogen balloons and seeded with silver-iodide crystals and prayed to in churches every day for months at a time, for rain. Usually the clouds wait to rain until they are farther west or east—over the Rockies or the Midwest. Probably, as you look out the airplane window, you will see the sun. On the plains, sunshine is dependable. Most of the buildings on the plains have roofs of galvanized metal. As dawn comes up, and the line of sunlight crosses the land, the roofs of barns and equipment sheds and grain silos and Department of Agriculture extension stations and grain elevators and Air Force barracks and house trailers and pipe warehouses and cafés and roadside-table shelters start to tick and pop in scattered unison, all the way from Canada to Texas.

The Great Plains are about twenty-five hundred miles long, and about six hundred miles across at their widest point. The area they cover roughly parallels the Rocky Mountains, which make their Western boundary. Although they extend from the southwestern United States well into Canada, no single state or province lies entirely within them. North to south, the states of the Great Plains are:

Montana
Wyoming
Colorado
New Mexico

North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Kansas
Oklahoma

Texas

The Great Plains include the eastern part of the first column, the western part of the second column, some of west Texas, and all of the Texas Panhandle. In Canada, they include southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. They are five hundred to a thousand miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, and over a thousand miles inland from the Atlantic. The Texas plains are about five hundred miles from the Gulf of Mexico.

Just where the Great Plains begin and end is not always certain. To the west, they sometimes continue past the Rocky Mountain front, through gentle foothills, and all the way to the Continental Divide. To the north, flatlands stretch past the Arctic Circle, but the open prairie has given way to boreal pine forests long before that. In the southwest, a change from semi-arid grassland to true desert is sudden in some places, slow in others. Of all the Great Plains boundaries, the eastern one is the hardest to fix. Many geographers and botanists have said that the Great Plains begin at the hundredth meridian, because that is the approximate limit of twenty-inch annual rainfall. Before Europeans came, it was more or less where the tall grasses of the East stopped and the Western shortgrasses started. (The hundredth meridian is the eastern line of the Texas Panhandle; a map of the lower forty-eight states folds in half a little bit to the right of it.) Since the same amount of rain never falls two years in a row, this eastern boundary always changes. Sometimes it happens to coincide at certain points with the Missouri River: the east side of the river will be green and lush, and the west side will be a tan and dusty cowboy-movie set. Farmers can't grow corn or raise dairy cattle or do much European-style agriculture at all on sub-twenty-inch rainfall, and when they first moved out onto the Great Plains they sometimes had difficulty borrowing money. Many banks and insurance companies had a

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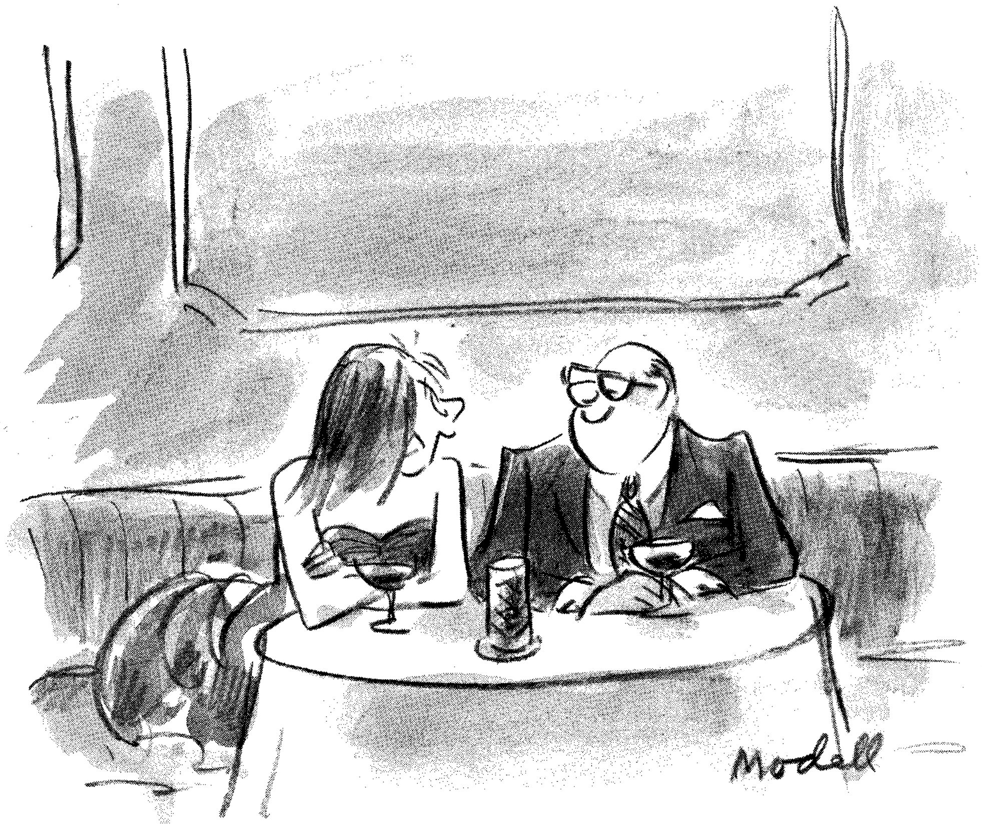

"Not at all—fund-raising sounds intriguing."

policy of not lending money for the purposes of agriculture west of the hundredth meridian. So, whether or not the rain stopped exactly at the hundredth meridian, at one time lots of Eastern loan officers did. If you were beyond their help, you knew you were on the Great Plains.

It makes sense that traditional finance would balk there, because the Great Plains don't exactly qualify as real estate. In fact, the Great Plains are probably better described in terms of the many things they aren't. They aren't woodlands; their subsoil doesn't have enough moisture for tree roots. You can go a long way out there without seeing a single tree. They aren't mountains (although they contain the Black Hills, in South Dakota, and the Bearpaw Mountains, in Montana, and the Cypress Hills, in Canada), and they aren't Land of a Thousand Lakes (although they used to have many sweetwater springs, and hundreds of rivers and streams, and an underground aquifer the volume of Lake Huron), and they aren't standard farmland (although they export two-thirds of the world's wheat and could export more). And although they have suffered droughts about every twenty years since white people first settled there, and millions of acres have gone to blowing sand, and although Zebulon Pike, who happened to pick a route that led through the sandhills region when he explored for the government in 1806-07, compared the Great Plains to the deserts of Africa, and although the members of a later expedition, in 1819-20, agreed with Pike, and published a map with the words "Great Desert" across the southern plains, and although a popular atlas of 1822 extended the label over more territory and in another edition changed it to "Great American Desert," and although that appeared in the middle of North America on maps and globes for fifty years afterward, and generations of geography students wondered about it and dreamed of going there, the Great Plains are not a desert.

White people did not consider moving onto the Great Plains in any numbers until after the Civil War. When they did, railroad promoters, governors of empty Western states, syndicates with land to sell, emigration societies, scientists, pretend scientists, politicians in crowded Eastern states, United States Geological Survey officials, Walt Whitman, the New York *Times*, the New York *Tribune* all loudly advertised the Great Plains as a garden spot. The idea of the Great American Desert came in for much scoffing and debunking. Strangely, the Great Plains greened up with good rains several times just as another wave of homeseekers was about to go there. People thought they'd harvest a couple of good crops and pay off their starting costs and be in business. In the eighteen-seventies and nineties, and in 1918-24, and, most spectacularly, in the nineteen-thirties, drought knocked parts of these waves back. Since their days as a Great Desert, the Great Plains have also been the Frontier (supposedly of such importance in the formation of the American character), the "newer garden of creation" (Whitman's phrase), the Breadbasket of the World, the Dust Bowl, Vanishing Rural America. The Great Plains are like a sheet Americans screened their dreams on for a while and then largely forgot about. Since 1930, two-thirds of the counties on the Great Plains have lost population. About fifteen years ago, the Great Plains reappeared, briefly, as part of the New Energy Frontier. The Great Plains contain more than fifty per cent of America's coal reserves. When we finally do run out of oil, somebody will probably think up yet another name for the Great Plains.

IN the fall of 1982, I moved from New York to Montana. I sublet my apartment to my sister, packed my van, and headed west. On the way, I stopped in Cleveland to usher at my other sister's wedding. At the reception, to entertain the bridesmaids, I ate a black cricket the size of my thumb. Later, I was driving around the city's west side by myself singing "Jerusalem" with the windows open, tears streaming down my face. The next morning, I wanted to call the hangover ambulance and go to the hangover hospital. The singing, and the feel of the cricket's toothpicky legs between my teeth, replayed in my mind on a tight tape loop. I took my van to Mike's Sohio Service Center for a tune-up, and when that was done I drove to Chicago. I stayed with friends there for one night, and then I drove

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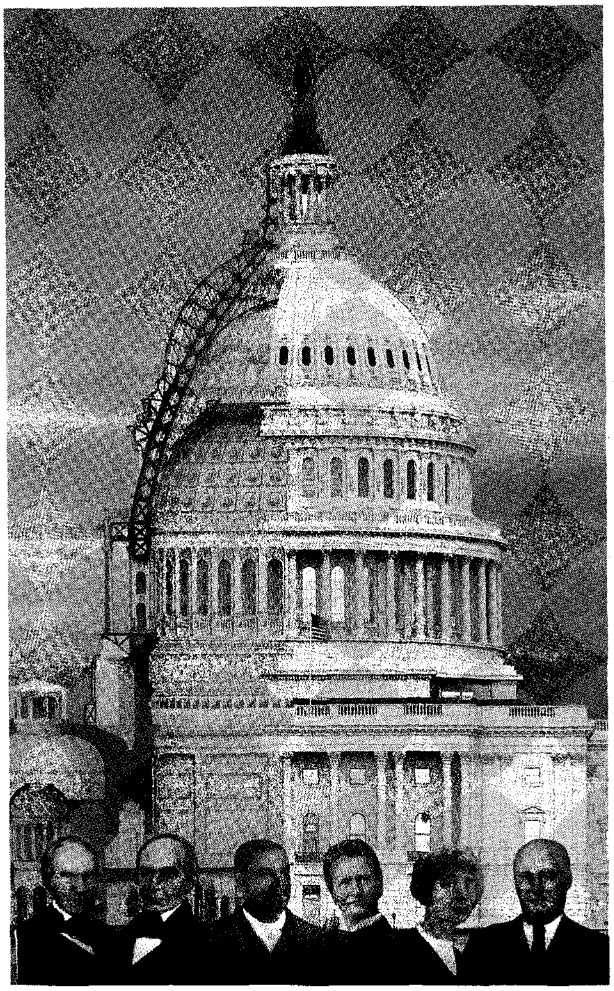

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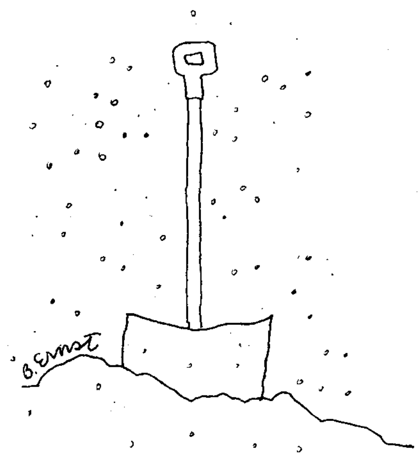
on through Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota, and didn't really stop until I crossed the Montana state line. At the edge of a little town, I pulled off the road, took off my shoes, moved some stuff from the mattress, and fell asleep, the gasoline still sloshing back and forth gently in the tank.

America is like a wave of higher and higher frequency toward each end, and lowest frequency in the middle. When the ticking of the car roof in the sun woke me, I looked out the windshield and saw nothing. A Hefty trash bag against a barbed-wire fence, maybe, torn to pennants by the wind; a metal prefab building in the distance; bunchgrass blowing; a road as straight as a string. I started the car and went on. I didn't pass a single place that looked as if it were in any way expecting me: no landscaped residential communities, no specialty sporting-goods stores, no gourmet delis offering many kinds of imported beers. Just grain silos, and flat brown fields with one cow on them, and wheat fields, and telephone poles, and towns with four or six buildings and a "No U-Turn" sign at each end. In the larger town of Shelby, Montana, I went to a café called Ma's, and people looked at me. I bought a newspaper to see about houses for rent, and from a picture at the top of a column recognized the columnist, a man with a large waxed mustache, sitting one table away. I continued west, across the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and then up through the mountain canyons. All at once, a low-slung '67 Pontiac full of long-haired Indians passed me, going about ninety. Then a Montana state highway cop, with no sirens going. Then several more cars of Indians, then another highway cop, then more Indians. Just across the Flathead River and inside the boundary of Glacier National Park, I came upon the cars again. They were now pulled every which way off the road; policemen and Indians, both, were just standing there, hands in pockets. Some were looking off into the brush. Nobody's mouth was moving.

On the other side of the mountains, in the city of Kalispell, Montana, I finally saw a few people who looked kind of like me. I parked my van and took a fifteen-dollar-a-week room in the Kalispell Hotel. The bathroom was down the hall; the walls were thin. I spent several hours listening to a man in the next room trying to persuade another man to trade him five dollars for five dollars' worth of food stamps. Daily, I looked at houses to rent—shotgun cottages by the rail yards, ski chalets with circular fireplaces, and a house that was built under a small hill, for energy reasons. Finally, I found one I liked—a cedar A-frame cabin with a wood stove and a sleeping loft and a flower box with marigolds. The house was on a long road that went from pavement to dirt and back to pavement. Beyond the road were foothills, clear-cut of timber in patches, like heads shaved for surgery, and beyond the hills were mountains. At the rental agency, I overheard a secretary giving someone else directions to the house. I mentioned to the agent that I could pay a two- or three-month security deposit in cash. The next morning, the agent left a message for me at the Kalispell Hotel and I called her back and she said I had the house.

I did not know one person in Montana. I sat in the house and tried to write a novel about high school; I went for walks, drank quarts of Coors beer, listened to the radio. At night, a neighbor's horse shifted his weight from hoof to hoof out in the trees, and sometimes cropped grass so near I could hear him chew. The first snowstorm blew in from the north, and crows crossed the sky before it like thrown black socks. For years in New York I had dreamed of Montana. Actually, I had also dreamed of joining the Army, going to truck-driving school in New Jersey, building a wooden sailboat, playing the great golf courses of the world, and moving to Fiji. I had examined all those ideas and then rejected them. Montana made the most sense to me. I saw the movie "Rancho Deluxe" (filmed in Livingston, Montana) eight or nine times. At parties, I told people, "Well, I'm going to be moving to Montana soon." Now here I was. Suddenly I no longer had anyplace to dream about.



So I started to dream about the Great Plains. For fantasies, the Great Plains are in many respects the perfect place. They're so big that you could never know all there is to know about them—your fantasies could never wear out. Even the plural in their name seems to make them extend further into a distant romantic haze. Also, they are a place where I will probably never live. This is important, because anyplace I move, I ruin. Look at the North Side of Chicago. Look at SoHo. I move in, the rents go up, coffee shops become French restaurants, useful stores close. Don't ask me how I do it—it's just a talent I have. A hundred years ago, it was not unusual to hear of single men and women and young couples with families moving out to start farms on the Great Plains. Today, you hear of people my age being urban pioneers in some neglected neighborhood, or moving to the suburbs, or moving to Northern California or Washington or northwest Montana, like me. You never hear of us moving to the Great Plains.

Whenever money and the weather allowed, I would cross the mountains and drive around on the plains. A friend came to visit in the spring, and the first thing I did was take her there. My friend is from the West Indies; she had never seen the American West, except for California. We followed U.S. Highway 2 to Glacier National Park, and then we went up the Going-to-the-Sun Highway, past standing dead trees burned in the lightning fire of 1967, through tunnels in the rock, past precipitous drops on the passenger side, past cliffs dripping water, past old snowdrifts with graffiti scratched on them, past our own chilled breath blowing out the car windows, past mountains with white, sharp tops, and then across Logan Pass, on the Continental Divide. I kept telling my friend I wanted her to see the Great Plains. The road began to descend, and at the turn of each switchback another mountain range would disappear, like scenery withdrawn into the wings, while the sky that replaced it grew larger and larger. We left the park and turned onto U.S. Highway 89. A driver coming down this road gets the most dra-

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matic first glimpse of the Great Plains I've ever seen. For some miles, pine trees and foothills are all around; then, suddenly, there is nothing across the road but sky, and a sign says "HILL TRUCKS GEAR DOWN," and you come over a little rise, and the horizon jumps a hundred miles away in an instant. My friend's jaw—her whole face, really—fell, and she said, "I had no idea!"

We came through the lower foothills, with vertebrae of rock sticking through their brown backs, and soon we were driving on a straight dirt road through unfenced wheat fields. We stopped the car and got out. The wheat—of a short-stemmed variety bred to mature at a height convenient for harvesting machinery—stretched in rows for half a mile in either direction. Through the million bearded spikes the wind made an "s" sound bigger than we could hear. We drove on, and birds with long, curved bills (Hudsonian godwits, the bird book said) flew just above us, like gulls following a ship. The sky was three hundred and sixty degrees of clouds, a gift assortment of mares' tails and cumulus and cirrus, with an occasional dark storm cloud resting on a silvery-gray pedestal of rain. We could see the shadows of the clouds sliding along beneath them far into the distance. I said that when early travellers on the plains came through a big herd of buffalo they could watch the human scent move through it on the wind, frightening animals eight and ten miles away. Suddenly we crossed the path of one of the rain clouds, and the hard dirt road turned to glue. Mud began to thump in the wheel wells, and the car skidded sideways, went off the road, and stuck. We got out in cement-colored mud over our ankles. Two pieces of harvesting machinery sat in a field nearby; other than that, there was no sign of people anywhere. I tried to drive while my friend pushed, then she drove while I pushed, then I left it in gear and we both pushed. We whipped the mud to peaks. It clotted on the wheels until they became useless mudballs. Finally I took a flat rock and got down on all fours and scraped the mud off each wheel. Then my friend drove carefully in reverse for one wheel turn until the wheels were covered again. Then I scraped the mud off again, and we drove another revolution. We kept doing this over and over until we made it back to dry ground. It took about two hours. Another event early travellers mentioned in their diaries was miring their wagons in the gumbo mud of the Great Plains. Now I knew what they meant. When I got back in the car, I was all over mud and my fingernails were broken. From her purse my friend produced a freshly laundered white cotton handkerchief.

For hours we drove on roads that Rand McNally & Company considers unworthy of notice. A moth glanced off the edge of the windshield, and in the sunset the dust its wings left sparkled like mascara. That night, my friend said on a gas-station pay phone, "I'm on the Great Plains! It's *amazing* here! The sky is like a person yawned and never stopped!"

Eventually, over several summers, I drove maybe twenty-five thousand miles on the plains—from Montana to Texas and back twice, as well as many shorter distances. I went to every Great Plains state, dozens of museums, scores of historic sites, numerous cafés. When I couldn't travel, I borrowed books about the plains from the Kalispell Public Library—"Curse Not His Curls," by Robert J. Ege (a ringing defense of General Custer), and "Crow Killer: The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson." I also watched the local newspapers for items about the plains, and finally I learned why the Indians and the policemen I had seen by the road the day I first arrived were standing that way. They were at the place where the bodies of two missing Blackfeet men, Thomas Running Rabbit and Harvey Mad Man, had been found earlier in the afternoon.

Police in Eureka, California, had arrested two Canadians for robbing a convenience store, and had discovered that the Canadians' car was the same one the Blackfeet men were driving when they disappeared. In custody, one of the Canadians, a nineteen-year-old named André Fontaine, said that they and another man had hitchhiked down from Red Deer, Alberta, to West Glacier, Montana; that there the three met two young Indian men in a bar; that they drove west with them in the Indians' car; that the Indians stopped the car; that his companions took the Indians into the woods; that he heard two shots; that his companions came running from the woods; that the three then drove away. Aided by this information, police soon caught the third man, a Canadian named Ronald Smith, in Wyoming. All three were returned to Montana and held in the Flathead County Jail. At first, they pleaded not guilty, but then Ronald Smith confessed to shooting both men. Smith was twenty-four, and he said that he had always wanted to see what it felt like to kill somebody. He said that it felt like nothing. While awaiting trial as an accomplice, André Fontaine was asked to appear as a guest on F. Lee Bailey's television show, "Lie Detector." The Flathead County Attorney, a county sheriff's detective, a local police detective, and a court-appointed defense attorney accompanied André Fontaine back to California for the taping. The show put them up in North Hollywood at the Beverly Garland Hotel, except for the prisoner, who stayed in the Los Angeles County Jail. When Ronald Smith confessed, he had requested the death penalty. He had said that he felt he was beyond rehabilitation, and that the Indians in the Montana prisons would probably kill him anyway. Shortly before his execution date, he changed his mind. Lawyers took his appeal through the county and state courts, which denied it, and to the United States Supreme Court, which refused to hear it. Then they filed another appeal in the federal courts challenging the constitutionality of the death penalty. Three years after the crime, while the appeal was still at the state level, I moved from Montana back to New York.

d. ehrenberg

AMONG the rivers of the Great Plains are the Cimarron, the Red, the Brazos, the Purgatoire, the Trinity, the Big Sandy, the Canadian, the Smoky Hill, the Solomon, the Republican, the Arikaree, the Frenchman, the Little Blue, the Big Blue, the South Platte, the North Platte, the Laramie, the Loup, the Niobrara, the White Earth, the Cheyenne, the Grand, the Cannonball, the Heart, the Knife, the Little Missouri, the Yellowstone, the Powder, the Tongue, the Bighorn, the Musselshell, the Judith,

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the Marias, the Milk, the Missouri. Some of these rivers have several forks, like the Clear, Salt, and Double Mountain Forks of the Brazos, or the Clear and Crazy Woman Forks of the Powder. All of them have had at least one other name; the Spanish, who were the first Europeans to explore the southern plains, called the Purgatoire the River of the Souls in Purgatory. Before the Lewis and Clark expedition discovered and named the Marias, the Indians called it the River That Scolds All the Others. The bigger rivers on the plains run roughly west to east. Carrying alluvial sands from the Rocky Mountains, they helped make the plains. Some, like the Brazos, flow to the Gulf of Mexico. Some run into the Red or the Arkansas, which both continue east to the Mississippi. The others end up in the Missouri, which follows a twenty-five-hundred-mile course from the northwest until it finally joins the Mississippi at St. Louis.

The rivers of the southern plains are dry much of their length, much of the year. All-terrain-vehicle tracks cross the white sand in the bed of the North Fork of the Red. As you go north, the rivers are more likely to have water. Descending from the flat benchland into their valleys can be like walking off a hot sidewalk into a spa. Cottonwood trees grow in the valleys; suddenly there is something between you and the sun. The trees lean at odd angles, like flowers in a vase. In the summers, windrows of cottonwood-seed down cover the ground. Big cottonwoods have bark as ridged as a tractor tire, and the buffalo used to love to rub against it. In the shedding season, the river bottoms would often be ankle-deep in buffalo hair. At sunset, the shadows of the cottonwoods fall across the river and flutter on the riffles. Carp sometimes rise up and suck insects off the surface with the same noise the last of the bathwater makes going down the drain. Sandbar willows grow as straight as dowels in the gray-black mud along the banks. Game trails six inches wide wind through the willows. For a while, the air is smarting with mosquitoes, and weird little bugs that don't bite but just dive right for your eyes. Later there are stars, and silence. At dawn, birds pipe the light through the trees.

Nineteenth-century travellers who wanted to see the interior of the Great Plains when it was still a wilderness used to ascend the Missouri the way people do the Amazon or the Nile today. The Indians who lived along the river grew maize and beans, dried them, and traded them to tribes who followed the buffalo herds. The river Indians usually built their villages near where the Missouri and another river joined, and the white traders who came later followed this example. Between 1805 and 1860, traders built posts at every major confluence along the river. In 1828, the American Fur Company began to build the biggest trading post on the Great Plains, on the north bank of the Missouri a few miles upstream from where it joins the Yellowstone. At first, they called the post Fort Floyd; later, in hope of the trade that would converge here, they called it Fort Union.

Until Fort Union was abandoned, in 1867, it was like the Times Square of the plains. Indians from all over the upper Missouri watershed and beyond came to trade their furs—beaver skins and buffalo robes, mainly—for alcohol, and also for muskets from London or Liège, scalping knives from Sheffield, blankets from the Cotswolds, steel traps from Manchester, powder and shot and dried corn from St. Louis, clothes from New York, clay pipes from Cologne, falcon bells and hand mirrors from Leipzig, glass beads from Milan, sugar and coffee from New Orleans, calicoes from Marseilles, and hardtack from Milton, Massachusetts. The buffalo robes were good for keeping warm in carriages in Northern cities. Beaver fur was usually made into felt, which was made into top hats, which appeared on the heads of rich men almost everywhere. Prime beaver fur has two kinds of hair: the longer guard hairs, on the outside, and a matted coat of finer hairs, called beaver wool, underneath. Furriers combed this beaver wool from the pelt, and then the wool was mashed together, soaked, stiffened with adhesive and shellac, and pressed into felt. Because beaver hairs are barbed, they stick together well, and the felt they make is sturdy, easily molded, weather-resistant, and fine-grained. Its color is warm and lustrous. Men today seldom wear any garment as elegant as high-crowned hats made of beaver felt used to be. Some countries had sumptuary laws that forbade the poor to wear beaver; usually, a beaver hat signified a doctor or a lawyer or above. The decline of Fort Union began at about that point in the nineteenth century when fashionable men discovered top hats made of silk from the Orient.

Furs—and beaver furs in particular—were a main temptation of empire in North America. Animals in cold lands grow the best fur, so the countries that first explored the northern part of the continent—England, France, and the Netherlands—were the leading rivals for the trade. The Dutch trade came down the Hudson River to the posts of the Dutch West India Company at New Amsterdam (Manhattan) and Beverwyck (Albany). The French trade came through French Canada to independent traders at Quebec and Montreal. After a century and a half of wars and treaties, the English finally had Canada and New England to themselves, and their Hudson's Bay Company, with exclusive rights to trade in millions of square miles of northern Canada, became the biggest fur-trading company in the world. The next rival to the English appeared after the American Revolution, when a German immigrant to New York named John Jacob Astor started the American Fur Company. For many years, the Hudson's Bay Company and the American Fur Company were the Exxon and the Mobil of the fur trade. As John Jacob Astor expanded his company west through the American territories, he destroyed and bought out and merged with many smaller companies. Fort Union was built by men from the former Columbia Fur Company, which once had posts from the Great Lakes to the Missouri.

At its height, Fort Union ate six hundred to eight hundred buffalo a year, and the boss of the fort—he was called the bourgeois—had his private stock of brandy, gin, smoked hams, plums, herrings, almonds, ketchup, and half-pint bottles of capers by the dozen. At his table one had to wear a jacket to dinner. Frenchmen, Spaniards, Russians, lapsed English noblemen, Swiss, Italians, Indians, half-breeds, escaped slaves, and Yankees worked at the fort. Naturalists, Indian agents, missionaries, sportsmen on hunting trips, Army officers, river pilots, surveyors, territorial governors,

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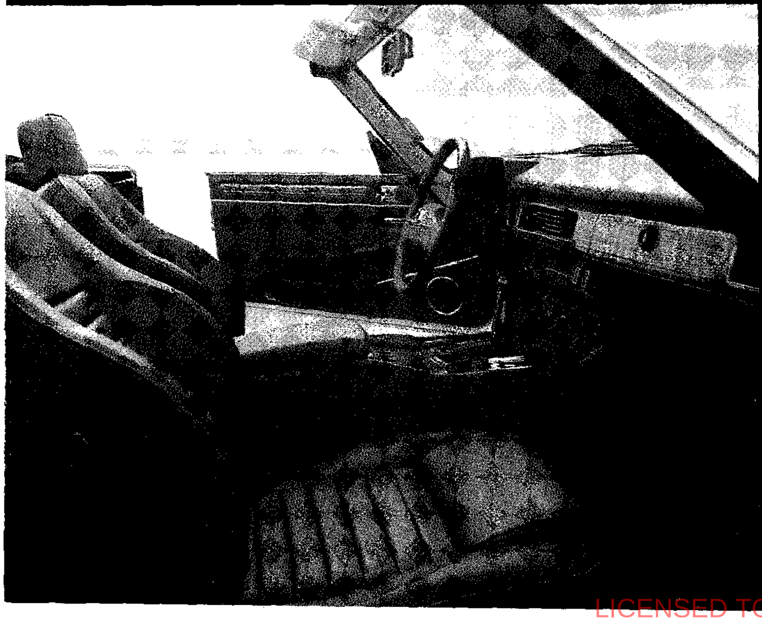

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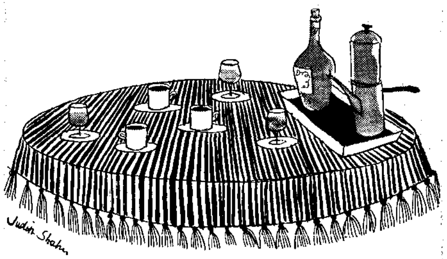
writers, and rival traders visited. George Catlin arrived on the steamboat Yellowstone in 1832 and painted portraits of Indians while sitting on a twelve-pound cannon in one of the bastions. The Swiss painter Karl Bodmer came with Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian, of the German principality of Wied-Neuwied, in 1833, and held the attention of an Indian named Nothing But Gunpowder with the help of a musical snuffbox. Some of the Indians thought the box must have a little white man hidden inside.

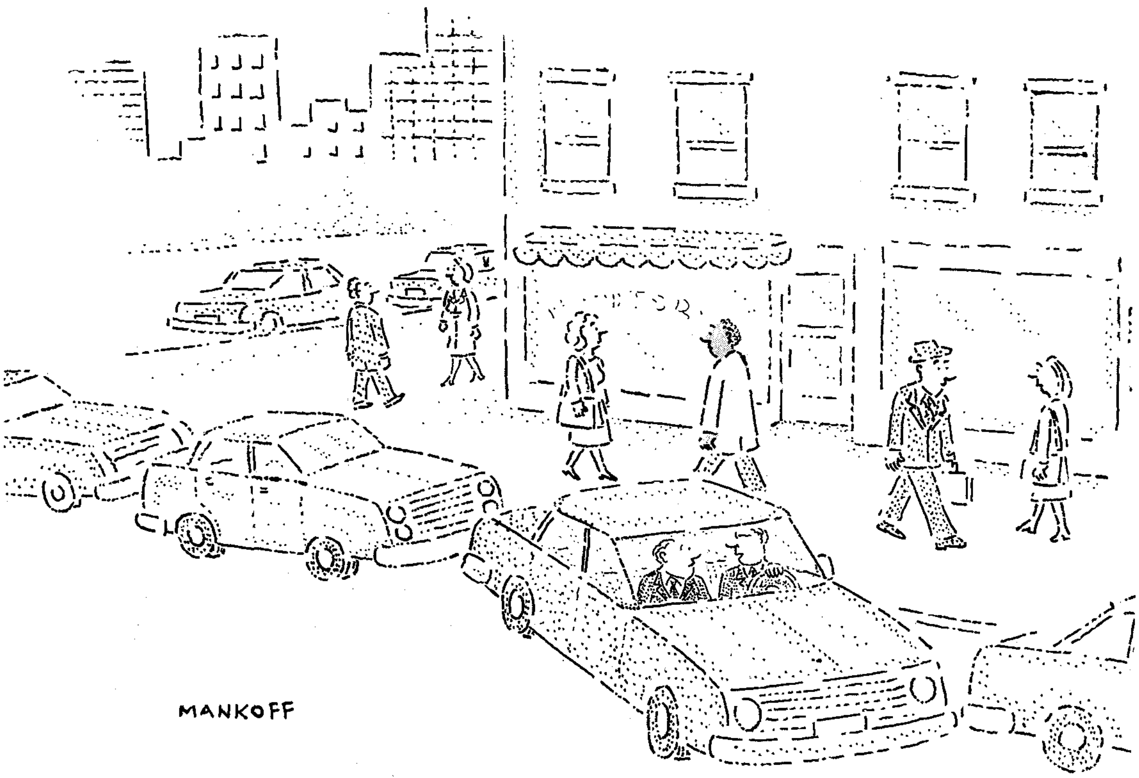
By the time the Yellowstone and the Missouri meet, they are both big rivers. When they're low, they expose acres of mud dried to jigsaw cracks. Full, they're both hundreds of yards across, and flow smoothly at the lip of their banks, suddenly boiling up with a sucking sound, then flowing smoothly again. The Great Plains usually give few hints about the uses people should make of them, but the expanse of flat tableland surrounding the confluence of these rivers strongly suggests a city site. It's like the junction of the Delaware and the Schuylkill, minus Philadelphia, or the confluence of the Allegheny and the Monongahela into the Ohio, minus Pittsburgh. The reason no city grew at the confluence of the Missouri and the Yellowstone is that in 1866 the Army built a post called Fort Buford a few miles east of Fort Union, and in 1868 created a thirty-mile-square military reservation with the post at the center. Since the reservation was closed to all settlement, the city that people eventually built was farther down the Missouri, at the junction of the Little Muddy River. Today this city is called Williston, North Dakota, and it gets much of its income from oil, and its long commercial highway strips wax and wane. Fort Buford was abandoned in 1895, and farms and ranches have since taken up the military-reservation lands. All of which means that the confluence of the Yellowstone and the Missouri, the surrounding landscape for as far as you can see, looks about the same in life as it does in a painting Karl Bodmer made from sketches drawn on a bluff north of Fort Union a hundred and fifty-six years ago.

The land Fort Union stood on was declared a national historic site in 1967. I have been there three times since. I liked to stand by the visitor center, which was a converted double-wide house trailer, and look up the driveway, past the barbed-wire fence, past the county road, past the railroad tracks, and across the mile of open plain to the bluff where Bodmer sketched. Owen McKenzie, half-Indian son of Kenneth McKenzie, the fort's most famous bourgeois, used to run wolves on his fast buffalo horse on this plain. An Assiniboin Indian wife of another bourgeois used to put on her best clothes and race her pony here, her "magnificent black hair floating like a banner behind her," according to one account. Here, also, Prince Maximilian watched a tribe of Assiniboin approach the fort; they wore eagle feathers, prairie-chicken feathers, wolfskins, antelope horns with yellow horsehair at the points, green leaves. Their faces were painted with white clay and vermillion and black paint. Crooked dogs with backbones showing pulled packs lashed to dragging travois poles. The warriors advanced in a group of two or three hundred, and sang a song that reminded the Prince of one he had heard the Russian soldiers sing during the Napoleonic Wars. On this plain, or near it, John James Audubon, who spent about nine weeks at the fort in 1843, once timed a lark to see how long it stayed aloft at a stretch (thirty-six minutes). Nobody rides or sings or walks or even drives very much on this plain today.

People don't drink as much here as they used to, either. In some ways, the history of the confluence area since white men first came is the history of a binge. Lewis and Clark, when they camped across the river in 1805, were so pleased at their arrival that they issued whiskey to all the party, and somebody got out a fiddle, and "they spent the evening with much hilarity," Lewis says. The main trade item at Fort Union was always alcohol. Many Indians would give or do anything for it. Traders made "Indian Whiskey" from straight alcohol boiled with ingredients like river water, ginger, molasses, red peppers, gunpowder, chewing tobacco, and (occasionally) strychnine. Whiskey with strychnine was said to produce an exceptionally crazy drunk. A man who was chief clerk at the fort for many years said that he sometimes stayed up all night dragging drunken Indians out by the arms and legs. He said that Indians sometimes snatched burning logs from the fire and rubbed them on their heads. Of course, Indians who were drunk also killed themselves and one another and froze to death and drowned and burned up and fell from their horses and died of withdrawal. John Jacob Astor, who owned the American Fur Company until 1834, once met in New York with George Simpson, of the Hudson's Bay Company, and suggested that both companies stop trading in alcohol. But finally Simpson and Astor agreed that if they did, the smaller whiskey traders would ruin them. Astor said that Simpson's company would hold the head of the cow and his own would hold the tail, and all the others would get the milk. Astor never went West himself. He lived most of his life on Manhattan Island, and built his first fortune on the fur trade. His son, William B. Astor, reported in 1831 that the American Fur Company brought them returns of half a million dollars a year.



For miles around the confluence in every direction, whiskey bottles littered the prairie. When the Army moved in, the first commander of Fort Buford, Captain William G. Rankin, spent much of his time under arrest for drunkenness. Drink often confined his successor, Colonel Andrew Bowman, to bed. The post surgeon recorded interments in the cemetery of soldiers like Bartholomew Noon, a private who apparently drank himself to death on a night when there was "much drunkenness in the garrison." Whiskey killed laundresses, scouts, teamsters, and more Indians. In 1889, the first North Dakota legislature voted to make the state dry, and in 1903 several men, including a German immigrant who was also an agent for Blatz Beer, founded a town three miles west of the confluence. The town was called Mondak, because it straddled the Montana–North Dakota state line, and the half of the town in Montana (which was wet) had nine saloons. Train crews from the Great Northern Railroad often stopped in Mondak to drink, and sometimes men would pass out on the tracks. It is said that the Great Northern ran over more people in Mondak than in any other place along the line. Except for some foundations, a small structure covered in red pressed tin, and a couple of rows of concrete cells that used to be part of its jail, Mondak has disappeared. As I watch the purple clouds building to the north, the cottonwood leaves showing their pale undersides in the wind, the whitecaps rising on the river, the veils of dust blowing from a butte, I wonder if maybe this scenery has somehow been permanently altered by the thousands of drunken eyes that have looked at it before.



"Amazing, three failed marriages, scores of disastrous relationships, many financial reversals, and countless physical ailments, but through it all I've always had good luck parking."

Employees of the Park Service have done enough minor excavation of the grassy eminence where the fort used to stand that they can indicate the different parts of it with markers. For years, their caretaking left undisturbed a ghost population as dense as any on all the ghosty plains. More recently, the Park Service has decided to rebuild much of the fort; now archeologists are digging up and photographing the site, to record what construction will destroy. The walls of the fort were squared-off cottonwood logs about seventeen feet high set in a rectangle two hundred and twenty by two hundred and forty feet. Against the inside of one of the walls for much of its length was a one-story building called the Dwelling Range, where some of the fort's employees lived with Indian wives and children. These employees had names like Michel Bellehumeur and Michel Carrière and Joseph Joyaille and Bonaventure LeBrun. Overlooking the walls were two whitewashed stone bastions. At the center of the fort was a sixty-three-foot-tall flagstaff, surrounded by a fenced plot of lettuce, radishes, and cress. Near it, a man who had just shot a clerk named Isidoro Sandoval through the head with a pistol in the retail store announced to the fort, "I, Alexander Harvey, have killed the Spaniard. If there are any of his friends who want to take it up, let them come on." None did. At one end of the fort was the bourgeois's house, which had glass windows, green shutters, and a red-shingled roof. Kenneth McKenzie once caught his squaw in the bedroom there with a young blond-haired trapper named Bourbonnais, and chased him from the fort with a club. Bourbonnais started walking around outside the fort yelling death threats, McKenzie got all the clerks to sign a paper agreeing that Bourbonnais could be killed if necessary, somebody warned Bourbonnais, he didn't stop, and McKenzie paid a mulatto named John Brazo to shoot him from the bastions. Badly wounded, Bourbonnais left for downriver some months later.

In a bed in the interpreter's room in the Dwelling Range, a young artist named Rudolph Friedrich Kurz once lay on buffalo robes, dreaming of milk. Like Karl Bodmer, Kurz was Swiss. The two had met in Paris in 1839, several years after Bodmer's return from Fort Union, and Bodmer had advised him to develop his technical skills further before heading for the wilderness. Kurz's study of painting and drawing had already consumed five years; he studied and travelled for seven more, and finally sailed for America in 1846. Kurz had elaborate theories about art, all of which seemed to revolve around the beauty of the nude figure. In St. Louis, he had to decide whether to go farther up the Mississippi or turn west up the Missouri. The Mississippi lost out, partly because (as he wrote in his journal) the Indians along that river "wore too many clothes." He wanted "Nude Indians, with their beautifully proportioned figures, their slender yet well-formed limbs, their expressive eyes, their natural, easy bearing."

Since Kurz didn't have enough money for an extended stay upriver, he continued his journey as an employee in the fur trade. From the deck of the steamboat St. Ange he watched through a telescope given him by his brothers Louis and Gustave as a group of Indian women and girls bathed in the Missouri: "As they thought themselves well concealed they were sportive and animated in a natural way. There were several dainty figures among them—so slender yet round, so

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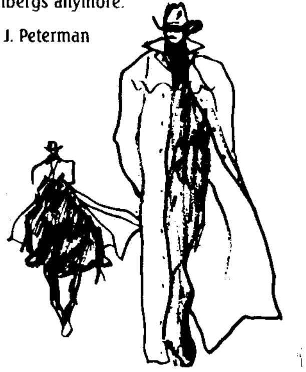

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supple yet firm. How they splashed and romped behind the partially submerged tree that they thought screened them from observation. Others dreamily dried themselves in the sun in postures and movements so natural and unrestrained, and yet such grace!"

Kurz clerked for a while at Fort Berthold, near the mouth of the Little Missouri. Then he went on to Fort Union, where he cut tongues out of buffalo heads and packed the tongues in brine, issued meat and lard from the storehouse, painted a portrait of the bourgeois with his hand in his waistcoat, rowed customers back and forth across the river, refused to paint a nude female figure for the bourgeois, and recaptured a fox, an eagle, and a bear when they escaped from their cages. He wore spectacles, and the Assiniboin called him Ista Topa (Four Eyes). The bourgeois's sidekick, a man named Jim Hawthorne, once got mad at Kurz and said he was ready to fight him with any weapon "from rifle down to needle." (Kurz did not take up the challenge; his family motto was "*Fier mais sensible*.") Often he had to share his bedroom with visitors to the fort, like the Assiniboin chief L'Ours Fou, who woke him up throughout the night to teach him Indian words and do imitations of animals. L'Ours Fou's imitation of a hog made Kurz laugh until tears ran down his cheeks.

In his spare time, Kurz did pencil sketches of the fort, a beaver dam, a snowshoe, saddles, moose horns, himself, the fox, a meeting between traders, an ox yoke, a dogsled, tattoos, and Indians; all the Indians were disappointingly clothed at this latitude, but he was always careful to indicate the forms underneath. Supplies ran low toward the end of winter, and the bourgeois sent him and a young Scotsman on a hunting trip so the fort wouldn't have to feed them for a while. Their camp was flooded twice by the swollen Missouri, their dogs ate up almost all the meat, they found almost no game, storms blew their tent down, and Kurz spent days wrapped in a buffalo robe, keeping the fire alive. When he got back to the fort, he decided that since he was almost out of drawing paper he might as well go home. He worked his way back down the river by rowing in a company keelboat. By the time he reached St. Louis, he was suffering from ague and dropsy. A man who owed him a hundred and forty dollars had disappeared, so he sold some of the collection of Indian artifacts that he was intending to use to accompany exhibits of his planned masterworks of the Far West. On his way east, he passed Niagara Falls, which he did not feel like looking at. In New York, he sold two watercolors and another part of his artifact collection. He bought a steerage ticket to Europe, was too sick to eat solid food the entire thirty-day voyage, and went straight home to Bern as soon as he landed. Reflecting later on his trip, he wished he "had taken more of an interest in things, such as studying the different species of ducks, etc." His journal ends, "*To earn my livelihood as artist in Bern. Alas! What a prospect.*"

THE first time I visited Fort Union was on an afternoon in early fall when the only other vehicle in the parking lot was a dark-green Park Service pickup. I had been driving for several days, talking only to order in cafés, and sleeping in my van at night. I walked around the fort site for a while, and then I went into the visitor center. The ranger who was there heard the door open, came out of his office, introduced himself, took me on a tour, showed me the elkskin winter moccasins he was sewing, led me inside a canvas tipi he had set up on the grounds, showed me some decorative porcupine-quill work he had done, took out a pipe of red pipestone, filled it with kinnikinnick (a mixture of tobacco and the dried inner bark of the red willow, which Indians used to smoke), lit it, and passed it to me. He was six feet five inches tall, barrel-chested, with one black braid falling across the National Park Ranger badge on his left breast pocket, and another falling across a name tag that read "Gerard Baker" on his right. I asked, and he said he was a Mandan-Hidatsa Indian.

Gerard Baker told me that the Hidatsa were also called the Minnetarees or the Gros Ventre; that the Mandan and Hidatsa had been neighbors and allied tribes for generations; that today many Mandan and Hidatsa lived on the Fort Berthold Reservation, in North Dakota; that when the Hidatsa were first sent there some of them didn't like it, and moved to the Yellowstone-Missouri-confluence area; that his own grandfather told him he remembered camping near here, and also remembered the soldiers who eventually marched them back; that one band of Hidatsa came originally from the sky, another from underneath the earth, and another from the big water; that before white men came the Hidatsa lived by the mouth of the Knife River in villages of round earth lodges; that they made many objects from the sandbar willow and were called "the people of the willows"; that their war parties sometimes went on raids hundreds of miles from home; that some people say it was the Hidatsa who gave history a nudge by capturing a Shoshone girl named Sacajawea and bringing her back with them from the Rocky Mountains to the Missouri, where she later met Lewis and Clark; that he and other Hidatsa believe Sacajawea was in fact a Hidatsa who had been captured by the Shoshone and who escaped from the Rocky Mountains back to the Missouri with the aid of wolves; that the Hidatsa were skilled plant breeders who developed a strain of maize still in use today; and that there were about twelve hundred Hidatsa before the smallpox epidemic of 1837 killed more than half of them.

Later, I learned that the smallpox epidemic of 1837 came up the river on the American Fur Company steamboat the St. Peter's. One of the carriers was Jacob Halsey, who was going upriver to take over as bourgeois at Fort Union, and who came down with the disease on board. He had been vaccinated, and soon recovered. The traders at the posts along the Missouri made efforts to keep the Indians away from the boat—efforts that unfortunately did not include turning the boat around and sending it back downriver. The disease spread quickly. In early July, it broke out among the Mandan. They rolled in fires, took sweat baths, gave all their possessions to medicine men, jumped in the river, threatened the traders' lives, killed their own families, killed their horses, killed themselves by pushing arrows down their throats. Their unburied corpses turned black and swelled to three times normal size. One observer said that fifteen hundred and sixty-nine of sixteen hundred Mandan had died.

No tribes were camped near Fort Union when the St. Peter's arrived there, and the traders attempted to contain the disease before the summer's trading began. They locked up the fort and inoculated all the Indian residents

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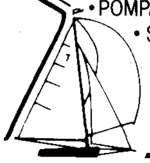

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and a few white men with the smallpox itself, following a practice outlined in a popular home-doctoring manual. Most of the thirty Indian women in the fort died. With the gates locked, the traders could not remove the bodies, and you could smell the fort from three hundred yards away. The Assiniboin came in to trade and hung around outside the walls and soon caught the disease. The bourgeois later estimated that ten out of every twelve Assiniboin died.

After the steamboat's arrival, the traders had sent a keelboat loaded with supplies farther upriver to the post among the Blackfeet. On the way, the crew came down with smallpox. Perhaps fifty-five hundred Blackfeet were camped by the post. The epidemic of 1837 eventually killed a total of about six thousand Blackfeet, and marked a sudden decline in their power on the plains. Indians fleeing the disease carried it to tribes far from the Missouri, and the epidemic did not slow down to the north until it reached the neighborhood of the Hudson's Bay Company posts in the Canadian territories. By 1837, most doctors knew that the English doctor Edward Jenner had demonstrated forty-one years earlier that injections of the virus of the milder cowpox could immunize people against smallpox. With almost two hundred years' experience in Indian trade behind it, the Hudson's Bay Company had sent supplies of smallpox vaccine to its traders. Not many used it at first, but when they saw the epidemic approaching they were able to vaccinate and save many Indians.

In fact, about half of the Assiniboin in the neighborhood of Fort Union who survived were ones the Hudson's Bay Company had persuaded to be vaccinated. Although anyone familiar with recent history along the Missouri River could have recalled several other times when smallpox brought by whites had killed Indians by the thousand, the American Fur Company never felt obliged to vaccinate its customers. Apparently, when the epidemic came in 1837 none of the American Fur Company posts even had any vaccine on hand. Here in the wilderness they had falcon bells from Leipzig, French fabrics, gin from Holland, capers, almonds, ketchup by the quart—but no smallpox vaccine. Jacob Halsey, one of those who brought the disease, later wrote to his superiors in St. Louis, "The loss to the company by the introduction of this malady will be immense in fact incalculable as our most profitable Indians have died." At Fort Union, trade stayed about average; those Indians not yet dead wanted to trade more and have a good time before the end.

Afterward, the company increased its small trade in Indian skulls—always one of the favorite curios of the plains. Other tribes occupied the empty villages of the Mandan and the Hidatsa, and then moved on. The earth lodges fell down and eventually disappeared, except for shallow round depressions in the ground where the floors used to be. Today, empty fields where the villages once stood are still faintly marked with clusters of these depressions; from a distance, the fields look like a smallpox survivor's face. At Fort Union, the cemetery where some of the Assiniboin smallpox victims were buried was partially dug up in the early nineteen-fifties, before the state and then the Park Service took over the fort site. Highway contractors needing fill took away truckloads, and the bones of Assiniboin smallpox victims mixed with the gravel used to pave the county roads.

Gerard Baker had a double-bladed throwing axe, and he and I spent an hour or so fooling around with it. On the grounds near the fort site he had set up a forked cottonwood log as big as a man, and had worn a path to it from marks at ten, fifteen, and twenty-odd paces. At each mark, he knew just how to hold the axe when he threw so that its end-over-end flight would conclude with one of the blades deep in the wood and the handle quivering. The first time I saw him hit from the farthest mark, I cheered. When I threw, the axe glanced off with a clatter. Sometimes he would run up to retrieve the axe, sometimes I would. He kept showing me the right way to hold it. Sometimes I missed the tree entirely. Finally, I got the axe to stick from ten paces. We threw again and again.

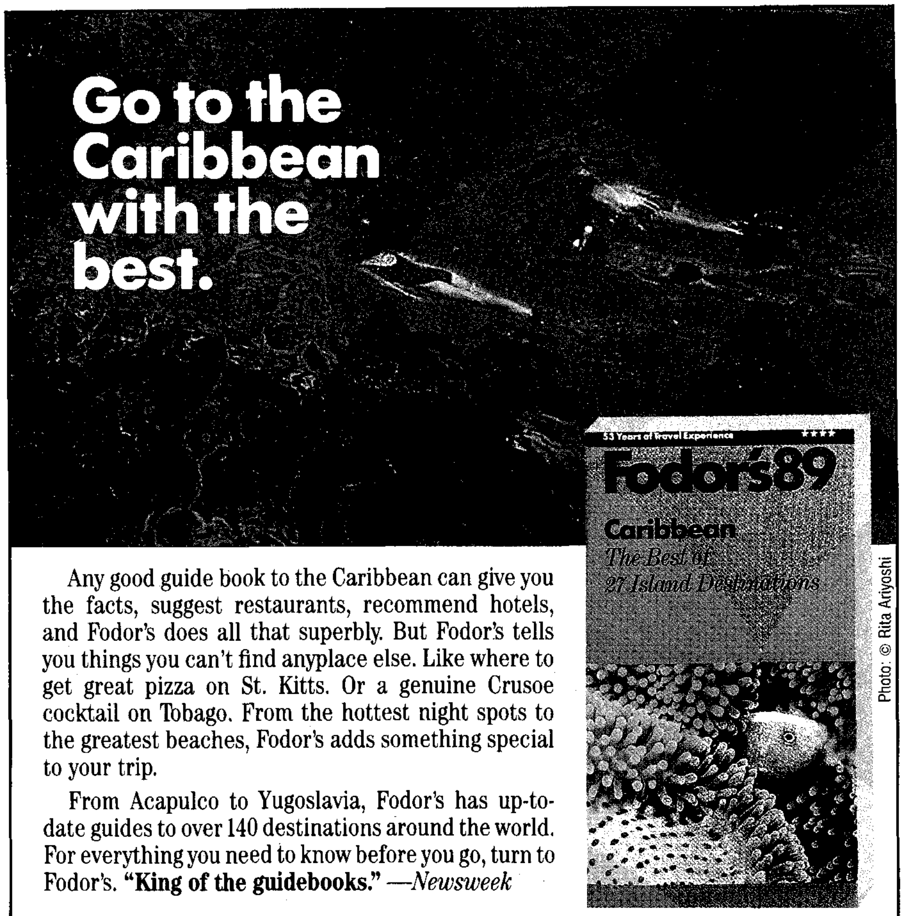
I was talking a blue streak. I don't remember what I said. Then Gerard Baker suggested we take a sweat bath. This ceremony was and is an important part of many Indian religions. It involves going naked into a small hut made of blankets or hides draped on a willow-branch frame, pouring cold water onto white-hot rocks inside, breathing steam as hot as you can stand, burning bunches of sweet grass, smoking and passing a sacred pipe, talking, praying, pursuing visions, and then coming out, rubbing yourself with sage, dousing yourself with cold water or a river plunge, and dressing again. I said I would like to but I really should get going. Gerard Baker picked up his ranger hat from the ground where he had set it and walked me to my car. We stood for a few moments looking across the plain to the north, and I told him I had imagined the tribe of Assiniboin that Prince Maximilian described crossing it a century and a half ago. Gerard Baker sighted along his arm to a small break in the bluffs beyond. "I bet that's the place they came through," he said. "I've found the trail of travois poles in the rock there. You can see the marks on each side where the poles dragged. There's all kinds of trails in those bluffs, and on top of a couple I've found eagle pits, where they used to wait with a rabbit or something for bait and grab eagles. I found buffalo jumps up there, too—places where they used to chase buffalo off cliffs to kill them. And my grandfather told me that when the Hidatsa were camping here after they left the reservation they sometimes buried people way back in those bluffs, using the old way of burying, with the bodies wrapped in hides and tied to platforms."

"Really? Could you maybe go up there and find those burials and find beads and pipes and stuff?" I asked.

Behind his brown eye, a shutter dropped. "Well," Gerard Baker said, "I suppose you *could* . . . "

HITCHHIKERS: Someplace in Wyoming, I picked up a guy who said his name was Darryl. He told me that he was an irrigator, and that he had just been fired from the ranch he worked for, because he fell asleep and neglected to close a dam and flooded out half a mile of highway. He told me that he was hungry, and that if I were to run over a jackrabbit we could build a fire and roast it. Whenever a jackrabbit popped up along the road, he would yell, "*Hit* the son of a bitch!"

Someplace in North Dakota, I picked up a guy from Black River Falls, Wisconsin, who said he was a truck driver in the process of moving to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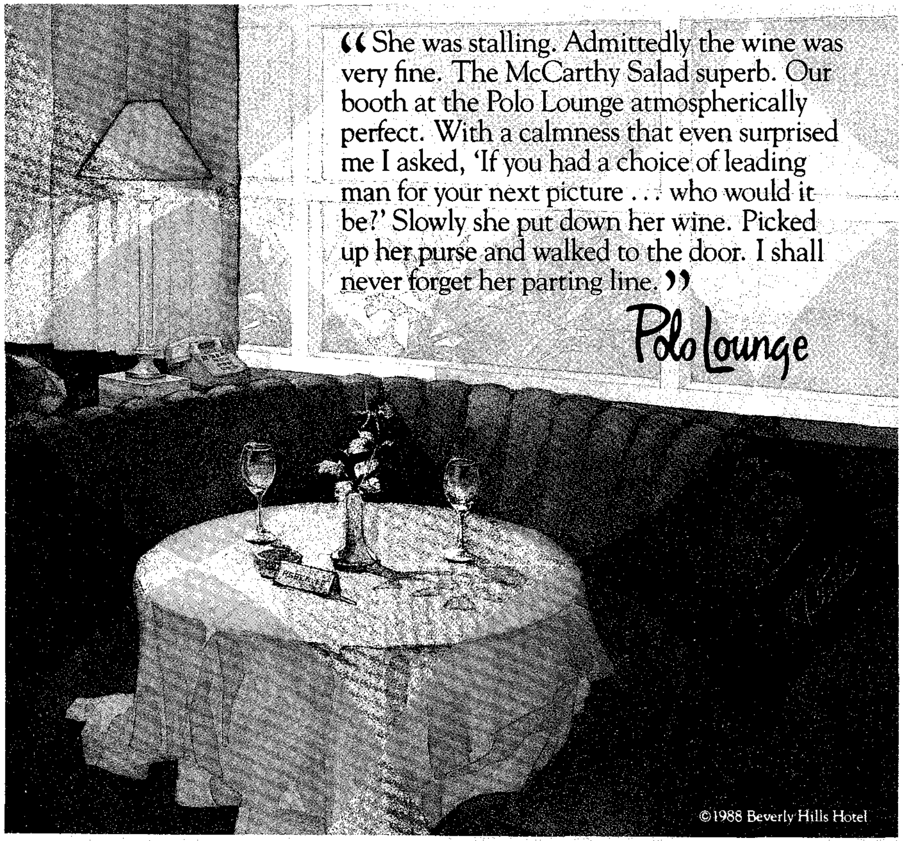

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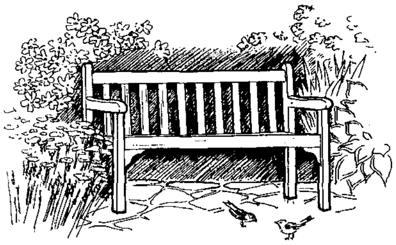

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California. An axle had snapped on his rented trailer, or something, so he was hitchhiking. He said he had to leave Wisconsin because after his sixth drunk-driving conviction the state had taken away his driver's license. He said that once he had established residence in California he would get a new license.

Someplace in Kansas, I picked up a guy from Stuttgart, West Germany, who said he was a graduate student in anthropology spending a term at Wichita State University. He had a backpack, a beard going blond at the ends, khaki shorts, tanned, blond-haired legs, and eyes so blue they looked white. He looked at the landscape and said, "Ach. Zo vlat." Then he said he was going to South Dakota to see Bear Butte, a landmark important to the religions of several plains tribes. "Za vite people in America haff done zuch terrible sings to za Indians," he said. "Za vite people haff destroyed zo many uff za Indians' zacred blaces."

I looked at him. "What is your name?" I asked.

"Gerhard Stadler," he said.

I asked him to spell it. He did, and then shut up.

At a convenience store–gas station in Sheridan, Wyoming, a guy with a green baseball hat and long dark hair asked me if I would give him and his wife and baby a ride back to their car, which had a flat tire thirty miles east. He said that his spare was flat, too, so they had hitched here with it to get it filled, and had been asking for a ride back since eight that evening. It was now about midnight. I said O.K. He told me his name was Lydell White Plume and his wife's name was Anna. They were on their way back from a powwow at the Crow Reservation in Montana and had stopped by his brother's house in Busby, on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, to pick up a television. The baby was completely quiet. Anna sat on the bed in the back of the van snapping gum. Lydell White Plume said that they lived in Riverton, Wyoming, on the Wind River Indian Reservation, and had to be there tomorrow for the funeral of his brother's sixteen-year-old stepson, who had hanged himself two days before. The stepson was one of nine young men who killed themselves on the reservation that year. Lydell White Plume said he thought the problem was lack of communication.

There were no cars or lights most of the way. Occasionally, we would pass a big orange flame at a well site, throwing spokes of shadow across the prairie. When we reached the car, I held a flashlight while Lydell White Plume changed the tire. He told me that he was a Fancy Dancer, who entered dance competitions at reservations all over the West and in Mexico. He opened the hatchback of his car and carefully lifted out parts of his dance costume to show me. From the darkness, the two of us leaned into the glow from the car's rear overhead light while he pointed out the detail in his dance bustle—the turkey feathers, the white, yellow, and ginger-colored plumes, the beaded center. Then he set the bustle back in the car, saw that no parts were going to get crushed, and pushed the hatchback shut.

South of the town of McLaughlin, South Dakota, on a gravel road on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, I picked up a guy who was walking in the other direction. He was short, in his fifties, wearing a white shirt with a brown paisley pattern. He got in and looked at me and said, "I remember you. You passed me by on the highway." I said I didn't remember seeing him. He said, "Yep. You passed me right by." In his hand was a brown terry-cloth washrag. He mopped his face with it. The afternoon was cloudless, maybe ninety-five degrees.

I told him I was trying to find the site of Sitting Bull's cabin. An exhibit in a museum in Mobridge, South Dakota, said that it was on the Grand River on a marked road off U.S. Highway 12. I had been driving around for hours and couldn't find any marked road. I couldn't even find the Grand River. "I'll take you right to him," he said. "I'm Sioux Indian. I own all this land. This is all tribal land. I've walked or drove every damn inch of it." We shook hands. His name was Jim Yellow Earring.

I knew the actual cabin wasn't there. The one-room log house where the famous Hunkpapa Sioux chief spent his final reservation years was disassembled sometime after his death and hauled away in wagons so that it could be displayed at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, and I once read that it eventually ended up in the Chicago city dump. But I wanted to see the place Sitting Bull had liked enough to live there. Places Indians liked are different from what you see while driving the grid of roads stencilled over the Great Plains. Sometimes when you find such a place it makes that grid seem to disappear.

Jim Yellow Earring directed me from the gravel road to a one-lane dirt road. Soon a strip of grass growing between the wheels brushed under the car. Then we were on no road at all, just prairie with faint wheel tracks across it. Then we bounced into a road with deep ruts, and red dust came up through the holes in the floor. Nowhere up ahead did I see anything that looked like a river valley. Jim Yellow Earring said to keep going.

Sitting Bull may have picked such a remote site for his cabin because he wanted to put plenty of distance between himself and Major James McLaughlin, Indian agent at Standing Rock. The two did not like each other. On McLaughlin's part, the feeling was closer to abhorrence. By the time Sitting Bull lived here, he was a celebrity. He had travelled America and Canada with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, had met President Cleveland and former President Grant, had spoken through an interpreter to large crowds on a fifteen-city lecture tour, had carried the flag at the head of a procession celebrating the opening of the Northern Pacific Railroad. He received fan letters in English, French, and German, hate mail, and letters from lunatics. He not only had an Indian agent, he had a booking agent. He sold his autograph for a dollar each. Fame made him a lot of money, but his colleague Annie Oakley remembered that he gave all the money away to ragged little boys. McLaughlin maneuvered to undercut his influence on the reservation, and favored other chiefs over Sitting Bull, and tried to humiliate him, and Sitting Bull was ornery right back. Sitting Bull was on the way to becoming one of the best-known Americans in history; the process would probably have been difficult even for someone who had not hated and fought white people most of his life.

Jim Yellow Earring pointed to a speck across the prairie. "That's my brother-in-law's house," he said. "He's got a well with the best damn

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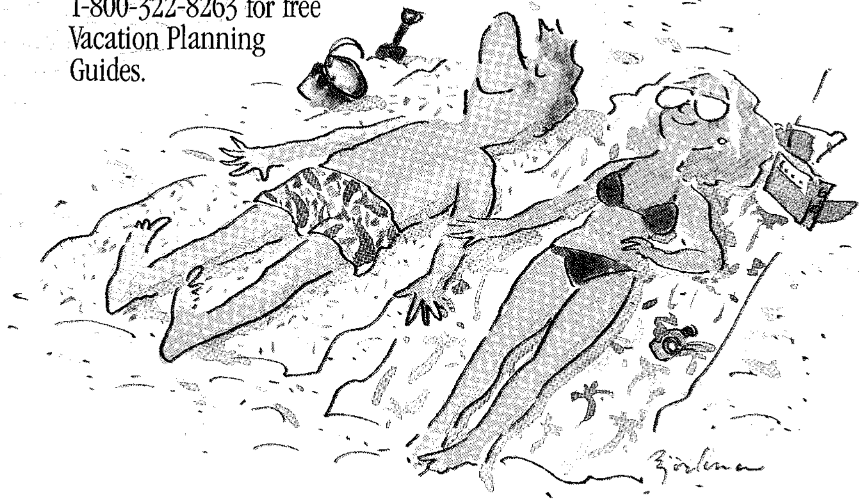
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water, makes the best damn coffee in the world. I'm pretty dry. I been walking all day. Do you have anything to drink?"

"There might be a couple of beers somewhere, but they're hot."

On the floor he spotted a plastic bottle of amber liquid with the brand name Mix-I-Go. "Hey!" he said. "What's this? Whiskey?"

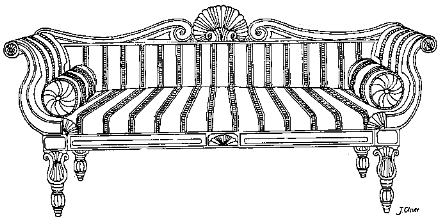
"God, no! That's gasoline additive! For the car!"

He looked at the bottle for a moment, reading the small print. Then, reluctantly, he set it back on the floor.

Another reason Sitting Bull chose to locate his cabin on the bank of the Grand River was that he was born there. In fact, one biography says that he was born in March of 1831 at a spot within a few miles of where his cabin later stood. The Grand River was called the Ree then, and the place was called Many-Caches. Sitting Bull was a quiet and deliberate child, and one of his names was Slow. Like many Westerners, he spent so much time on horseback when he was little that he grew up bowlegged. He had a good singing voice, and women always loved him. As a young man, he was in many battles with other tribes and white people. A Crow shot him in his left foot in a fight on Porcupine Creek, near the Yellowstone River. Sitting Bull killed the Crow, and limped for the rest of his life. At a skirmish near White Butte, on the Little Missouri River, a soldier shot him in the left hip with a pistol. At a battle with some Flatheads near the Musselshell River, he was shot through the left forearm between the bones with an arrow. In a standoff fight with the Army escort of a railroad surveying party in the Yellowstone valley, he sat down within range of the soldiers' rifles and smoked a pipe while bullets hit around him. Several other Indians joined him, and when the pipe was finished they got up and ran; Sitting Bull walked. Before the Battle of the Little Bighorn, Sitting Bull made a spiritual offering of one hundred pieces of his flesh, and sang while his adopted brother, Jumping Bull, cut fifty, each the size of a matchhead, from each arm. After that battle, he eventually fled with other Sioux north to Canada, and returned to surrender at Fort Buford in 1881. The Army promised him amnesty, held him for two years at another fort, and sent him to the Standing Rock Agency in 1883.

This is not the kind of history that breeds immediate warmth and trust between peoples. In the rearview mirror I looked at my eyes, marked by worry and second-guessing with little lines like the calibrations on a camera lens. Then I looked at Jim Yellow Earring's eyes—calm, bloodshot, brown as a deer's. "Keep going, I'll take you right to him," he said. The road had now become so deeply rutted that the trick was finding the exact moment to steer from one set of ruts into a new set to the right or left. Just as we were about to high-center, Jim Yellow Earring would yell, "My side! Come over to this side! . . . O.K., O.K., now your side!"

Sitting Bull naturally attracted to him the wildest and most unreconstructed Indians on the reservation, and they pitched canvas tipis and built cabins close to his, and the place became known as Sitting Bull's camp. When the Ghost Dance religion swept the Indian reservations of the West, in 1889-90, Sitting Bull's camp was where all the reservation's Ghost Dancers gathered. The Ghost Dance religion was one of the saddest religions of all time. It was the invention of a Paiute Indian called Wovoka, who may have been inspired by the doctrines of an earlier Paiute holy man called Tävibo. Wovoka had lived with a white family, who knew him as Jack Wilson. Part of his education had consisted of Christian religious training, and he sometimes said he was the Messiah returned, and his followers called him the Christ. It may be impossible for any white person ever to explain Ghost Dancing, but evidently the idea came to Wovoka in a vision during an eclipse of the sun on January 1, 1889. He said that he went to Heaven and saw God, who told him that if the Indians did a dance He would teach him, and danced long enough and hard enough, all white people would be submerged under a layer of new earth five times the height of a man, and the buffalo would return, and all the Indians who had ever lived would come back to life, and the land would become a paradise. Certainly, this would be an attractive philosophy for any American Indian at the end of that century, who was likely to have more friends and close relations among the dead than among the living. News of Wovoka's vision spread among the Western tribes, and many sent delegates to meet and talk with him. One of the Sioux delegates reported later that he "saw the whole world" when he looked into Wovoka's hat.



The road now led down a gully so steep that Jim Yellow Earring was thrown forward. His handprints were still in the red dust on the dashboard months later. I said I wasn't going any farther. I put the car in reverse and tried to back up. Nothing happened. So we headed on down, with bushes now scraping the side. A branch came through the open window and caught me on the side of the head. Jim identified it as a branch of the wild-plum tree. He said that wild plums were delicious. The high grass bent down under the front bumper and then sprang up when we passed. In the river bottom, where we finally stopped, the grass was above the door handles.

Ghost Dancers danced past exhaustion and often lay on the ground in a trance, their skin shivering, for days at a time. When they regained consciousness, they told of the distant stars they had visited, and of the long-dead friends and relatives they had talked to. Sometimes they brought back white, grayish earth—a piece of the morning star—as proof. Desperate as it was, the Ghost Dance did not originally have violent implications, but among certain tribes—the Sioux in particular—it soon acquired them. Indians often painted symbols of the dance on muslin shirts, and some began to say that these paintings made the shirts bulletproof.

"This is the place," Jim Yellow Earring said. "It was plentiful with deer in the old days. Back then, it was all flat ground and them cottonwoods growin' like weeds. In 1949—that's when the river really came. That was the big flood. That's why these banks are here. This used to be a big prairie-dog village, but the government poisoned 'em all. From here it's about twelve miles to the town of Bullhead, *ichipasisi*. That means walking along a river crossing back and forth—you know, like sewing."

The Ghost Dance frightened white people on and near the reservations,

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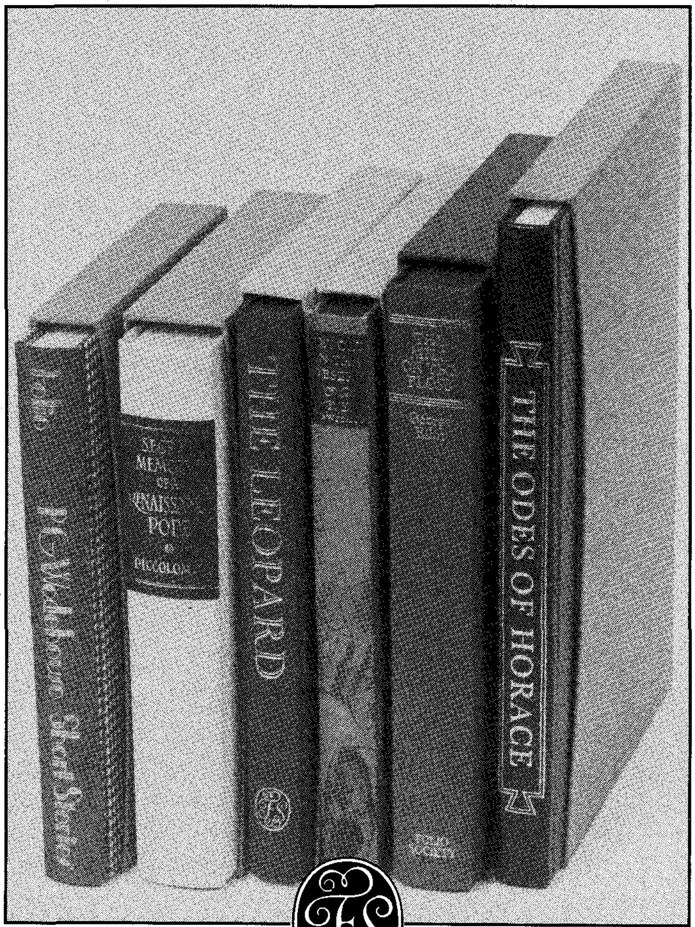
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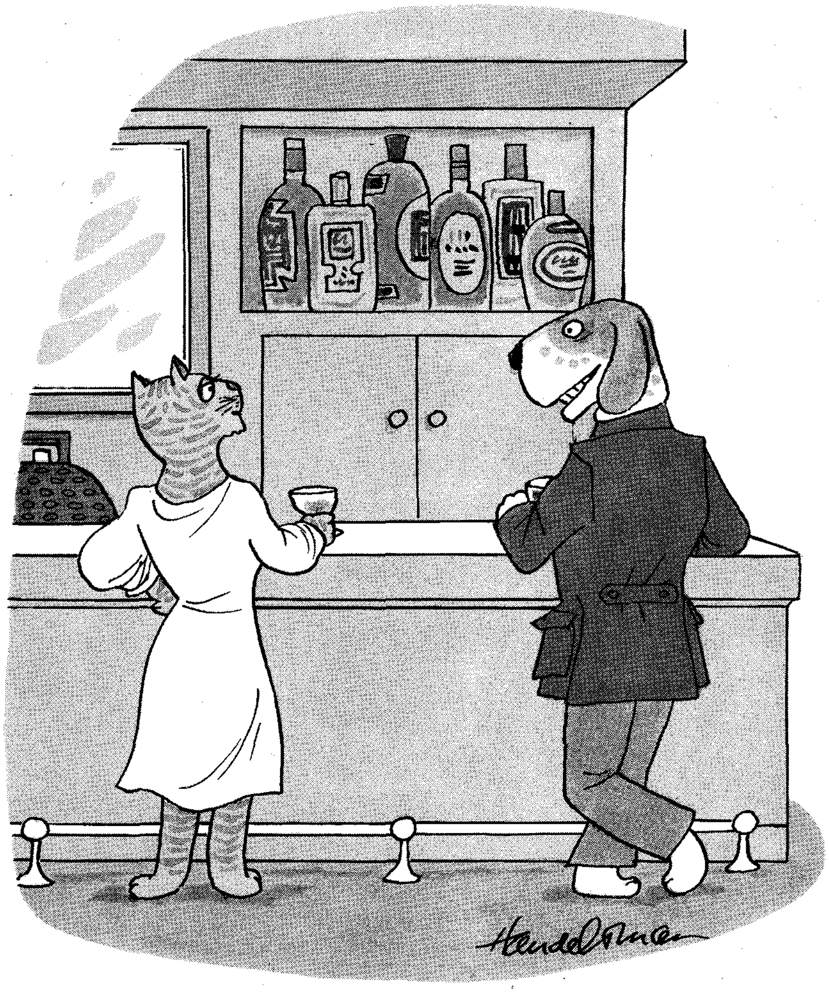

"So you're anthropomorphic too? It's a small world."

• •

and the Indian agents jailed its leaders and called for military support. One agent, R. F. Royer, of the Pine Ridge Reservation, whom the Indians nicknamed Young Man Afraid of the Sioux, sent so many telegrams to Washington that the Army soon responded with thousands of troops. Agent McLaughlin, as a matter of pride, preferred to handle problems at his reservation with his own Indian police, and he ordered them to arrest a fierce warrior named Kicking Bear, the leader of the Ghost Dancers there. Somehow Kicking Bear caused the police to return, dazed, without him. At Sitting Bull's camp was a wealthy widow from Brooklyn named Catherine Weldon, who was a representative of the National Indian Defense Association, and who was serving Sitting Bull as secretary. She thought the Ghost Dance was a Mormon plot, and she challenged Kicking Bear to an open debate. Apparently, Kicking Bear declined.

The spot where Sitting Bull's cabin stood is surrounded by a woven-wire fence with a swinging gate. Inside the fence are a stone obelisk and a metal plaque erected by the South Dakota State Historical Society. The plaque's inscription begins, "Sitting Bull, best known American Indian, leader of the 'hostile groups' for a generation, a powerful orator, a clever prophet . . ." A grove of bur oaks grows above the fence, and the grass is high all around. I walked over to look at the Grand River, and suddenly a three-foot-long rattlesnake reared out of the grass, rattling. I saw the white of his belly as he flopped over on his back trying to get away. Jim Yellow Earring went for him like a man chasing a bus. "I'll snap his tongue out of his bone head for you," he said. I asked him please not to.

McLaughlin eventually induced Kicking Bear to leave the reservation. McLaughlin hoped that with the coming of cold weather the dance would die out. Sitting Bull told the people that this year the weather would stay fair and they could dance all winter, and he was right. McLaughlin sent a telegram to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington recommending that rations be suspended for all Ghost Dancing Indians at Standing Rock. The Commissioner sent a telegram back asking for the names of Indian "leaders of excitement or fomenters of disturbance" who should be arrested. McLaughlin told the Indian police that they might have to arrest Sitting Bull, and they resigned. McLaughlin appointed new police, under the command of a Yankton Sioux named Henry Bullhead. Catherine Weldon could not get the Indians to listen to her, was outraged when Sitting Bull proposed marriage, and finally left Sitting Bull's camp in disgust. Sitting Bull drove her in his wagon to the town of Cannonball. In Chicago, Buffalo Bill Cody found out that Sitting Bull was to be arrested, persuaded an Army general to give him the arrest order, took a train to Standing Rock, and was on his way to Sitting Bull's camp with a wagonload of candy and presents, drunk, when McLaughlin delayed him long enough to get the order rescinded. McLaughlin heard that Sitting Bull planned to leave the reservation, so on the morning of Monday, December 15th, he sent forty-three members of the Indian police to Sitting Bull's camp to arrest him. About a hundred cavalrymen, with a Gatling gun and a gun that shot explosive shells, waited in reserve three miles away.

One of the Indian police said later, "Sitting Bull was not afraid; *we* were afraid." In Sitting Bull's camp were men who had killed a lot of people in the past, men who had recently decided that they were bulletproof. The police rode into the camp before dawn and found Sitting Bull in bed. The camp woke up right away and backed the police up against the cabin when they tried to put Sitting Bull on his horse. One policeman had Sitting Bull around the waist, two others had his arms. Somebody yelled something; Sitting Bull yelled something; people say that a man named Catch the Bear shot Bullhead; people say that Bullhead, falling, shot Sitting Bull; then thousands of shots were fired. Sitting Bull, punctured so often in the past, was hit seven times. He, his son Crowfoot, Jumping Bull, his son Chase-Wounded, Catch the Bear, Blackbird, Spotted Horn Bull, and Brave Thunder died. The police lost Bullhead, Little Eagle, Hawk Man, Arm Strong, Middle, Afraid of Soldier, and Shavehead. Throughout the fight, no English was spoken.

"Someone went to quite a bit to write that down," Jim Yellow Earring said, leaning on the fence to read the plaque. "Ol' Sittin' Bull—he didn't give a damn if he was comin' or goin'." I copied the inscriptions on the plaque and the obelisk in my notebook. Then I asked Jim Yellow Earring to write for me the Sioux words for rattlesnake, for walking along a river crossing back and forth, and for yellow earring (*Zewiy*: "I wisht I'd'a used that name in the service"). The Sioux script taught at Indian schools looks as pretty as spoken Sioux sounds. The sun was now shoulder-high. It made the tassels of the grass look red, and it caught the white spot under the wings of nighthawks flying above us as erratically as the insects they were chasing.

I made sure I had a place to turn around, and then we started out. I was afraid I'd never get up the steep gully, but I did, my rear wheels tiptoeing along the edges of the ruts. It seemed longer this way than it had coming in. Jim Yellow Earring told me about an argument he had had with the Farmers Home Administration when he asked for a loan; about his days in the Army, in Fort Benning, Georgia; about his mother, who was dead; about a man named Straight Pine, a short, stocky fella who used to run the best damn Hereford cattle in the area; about how the Crow Indians in Montana drink Lysol, also known as "Montana gin," which will sure get you drunk, but which can collapse your lungs if you don't mix it right; about how much he loved to dance; about how his mother used to take him and his brothers down to the Grand River to play; about how he owned all the land I was looking at, and so what if they wouldn't let him run cattle in here, he'd take and run cattle in here anyway; about what a tough guy Bullhead (he pronounced it "Bull'id") was; about how Sitting Bull pulled a good shot on Custer; about all the white people who dig ruts in this road on their way to see Sitting Bull's camp. He kept telling me "My side! Your side! My side!" He did imitations of different accents—Navajo, black, New York. He sang a song about being a thousand miles away from home, waitin' for a train. He asked me, "Did you ever get lonesome? My mom died nine years ago, and we used to live—Well, did you see that old washing machine we passed back there? Well, that's where our house was."

"That was your washing machine?"

"It was *my mother's* washing machine."

IN former times, Indians thought the white men's custom of shaking hands was comical. Sometimes two Indians would approach each other, shake hands, and then fall to the ground laughing. Indians swam differently from white people, built smaller campfires, sharpened knives only on one side, and did not use the stars to guide themselves. White butchers saw through bones and cut meat across the grain, but Indians usually cut with the grain and rarely sawed bones. Some Indians would not eat meat cut across the grain. Indians usually did not (and do not) grow a lot of hair on their faces or arms or legs, and some found the hairy bodies of white men disgusting. Indians were shocked by the way white parents grabbed their children's ears to discipline them; because of this custom, some Indians called white people Flop Ears. Almost all Indians, at one time or another, composed verses about events in their lives or visions they had seen, but they did not use rhyme. For many Indians, swear words or "Whiskey!" were the first English they learned. In front of white people, Indians did not like to refer to one another by name.

Indian children played with toy bows and arrows, and often put each other's eyes out. There were many one-eyed Indians. Indian children did not have to be in bed by a certain hour, and often stayed up throughout the night. The historian Francis Parkman, when he lived in a Sioux camp in 1846, kept a short stick for punching the heads of kids who climbed on him in his sleep. An Indian camp in no danger of attack was likely to be noisy all night long. People chanted, dogs howled, women mourned, gamblers shouted. Many Indians loved to gamble, and played guessing games with objects hidden in one hand or the other. Many also learned card games like monte, poker, and seven-up. In winter camps, gambling

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was sometimes about all the men did.

Most Indians did not know how old they were. They measured time in days, moons, and winters, but they had no weeks, hours, or minutes. On the eve of an important event, when they were afraid they might oversleep in the morning—for example, when a war party discovered an enemy camp and wanted to make sure to wake up and attack it at first light—Indians would drink a lot of water before going to bed.

Indians loved crowbars. They used them for digging prairie turnips, bitterroot, tobacco root, and holes for tipi poles. When freshly pitched, tipis were nice inside, with the grass still green and fresh. It took twelve to fourteen tanned buffalo hides to make an average-sized tipi, and as many as fifty to make a big one. As the hides aged, they became like parchment, and let more light through. At night, a tipi with a cooking fire inside was a cone of light. A fully equipped tipi had almost as many ropes, lines, pegs, and parts as an old-time sailing vessel. Women were in charge of putting up and taking down tipis; Kit Carson, the famous frontier scout, lived for years in a tipi with no idea how to pitch one. Tipi poles were made of the slender trunks of young lodgepole pines, and were rare items on the treeless plains. Tribes made special trips to the Rockies or the Black Hills to get them. Since the poles dragged on the ground behind horses during moves, they quickly wore down. All plains tribes constructed tipis with poles set one after another in a central framework of three or four poles. If you lay on your back and looked out the smoke hole in the top of the tipi, the poles made a spiral going up into the sky.

In the barter system of the plains, five tipi poles might equal one horse. Price in this system varied with circumstance, but the horse served as a loose standard. One good horse might be worth a cougar skin, an eagle tail of twelve feathers, eight or ten peyote beans, two gallons of shucked corn, or six tanned buffalo robes. Mules were hardier and rarer than horses, so one mule was worth at least two horses. Indian women liked to decorate their dresses with the smooth lower incisors of the elk; one horse was worth a hundred to a hundred and fifty elk teeth. Two knives, a pair of leggings, a blanket, a gun, a horse, and a tipi might be the price of one wife. A wife, if she worked hard, could prepare ten buffalo robes for trade in a season. At the traders', one buffalo robe was worth from seven to nine cups of sugar. A white mackinaw blanket with a black stripe—Indians preferred that style, so it was more expensive—cost two or three robes. Indian men learned that the more wives they had, the more robes they had to trade. A dressed deer skin equalled from fifteen to twenty rifle balls and powder, an elk skin from twenty to twenty-five. All the meat of one buffalo cow was worth from twenty to forty balls and powder, depending on how far away the herds were. Around 1830, prime beaver pelt was worth six to eight dollars a pound. For ten months of work, setting traps in cold water, dodging Indians, starving, freezing, getting attacked by bears, a trapper made about a hundred and fifty dollars. The boatmen who brought trade goods up the Missouri as far as the Yellowstone made two hundred and twenty dollars for the round trip. Prices at the trading posts averaged nine times as high as back East. As late as 1852, there were no pennies on the Great Plains—west of St. Louis, the nickel was the smallest coin. Indians sometimes used gold and silver coins for buttons on their shirts. When a band of Indians plundered a Missouri River keelboat carrying twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of gold dust in buckskin sacks, they poured the gold dust onto the sand and kept the buckskin sacks.

All kinds of Indians lived on the plains. In fact, after the coming of the horse, iron, and colored beads, but before smallpox, alcohol, and the Army, Indians generally prospered and multiplied on the plains. The Sioux, who moved there from the lake region of present Minnesota in the mid-eighteenth century, were also called the Western, or Teton, Sioux, to distinguish them from the Yankton and the Santee Sioux, who remained in the East. On the plains, the Teton Sioux soon numbered seven bands: the Hunkpapa, the Oglala, the Miniconjou, the Oohenonpa, the Sihasapa, the Sicanju, and the Itazipcho. The Sioux's favorite enemy, the Crows, were originally Hidatsa who had moved west from the Missouri River in the seventeen-hundreds after an argument between two chiefs. The Crows were also called the Absaroka, and they hunted in the Yellowstone valley. Later, other bands of Crows moved even farther west, to the Rockies, so then there were River Crows and Mountain Crows. To the north of the Crows were the Blackfeet, a tribe who killed white trappers by the score, and who ranged into the Canadian plains. The Blackfeet divided themselves into the Bloods, the Piegans, and the Northern Blackfeet. To the northeast of the Blackfeet were the Atsinas, who did not trap beaver, and the Crees, who did. Traders liked the Crees better than the Atsinas, which made the Atsinas hate the Crees. There were Plains Crees, Woodland Crees, and Swampy Crees.

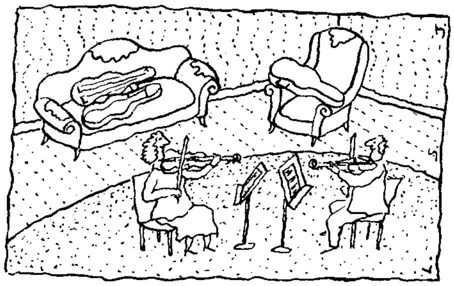
The Cheyenne, who also once lived in Minnesota, hunted the region of the Black Hills and the central plains. In the early nineteenth century, many Cheyenne moved south, to the present Oklahoma and Kansas, so the tribe became the Northern Cheyenne and the Southern Cheyenne. To the west of the Cheyenne were their allies the Arapaho, also divided into Northern and Southern branches, and to the west of the Arapaho, roughly speaking, were the Shoshone, sometimes called the Snakes. In the southwest were the Kiowa, the Kiowa Apache, and the Comanche. The Comanche lived mainly in present Texas, and raided as far south as Central America. There were five major bands of Comanche, with names that meant Honey Eaters, Those Who Turn Back, Antelope, Buffalo Eaters, and Root Eaters. Lots of other tribes, like the Pawnee, the Miami, the Otos, the Osages, the Arikara, the Delawares, the Tonkawas, the Kansas, sometimes came to the plains to hunt or fight from the south and the east, as the Flatheads and the Nez Percé and the Utes and the Apache came from the west. I pass over which several of the plains tribes were also known at one time or another as the Gros Ventre (Big Bellies). Often, bands within the tribes were further divided into subgroups along kinship lines. Most of the tribes would steal horses from or fight most of the others. The fact that their culture tended to fragment itself into so many tribes and bands was probably a disadvantage to the Indians in the long run. But it certainly was a big help to early pioneers trying to come up with colorful place names.

The Sioux disinfected the navels of newborn babies with the powder from a puffball. The Hidatsa, when travelling in winter, packed babies in cattail down. Sioux (and other Indian) children nursed until they were as old as four or five. White observers of Indian encampments were surprised to see children standing on the ground and nursing at women going about their chores. The Crows thought long hair was fashionable, and sometimes gummed horsetails into it to increase its length. In the eighteen-thirties, the Crows had a chief called Long Hair whose hair (all his own) was eleven feet six inches long. Measuring Long Hair's hair was a favorite pastime of white travellers. The Crows were skilled horse thieves, and stole from everybody, including each other. They claimed never to have killed a white man except in self-defense. They explained to one trader that if they killed white men there would be fewer to rob.

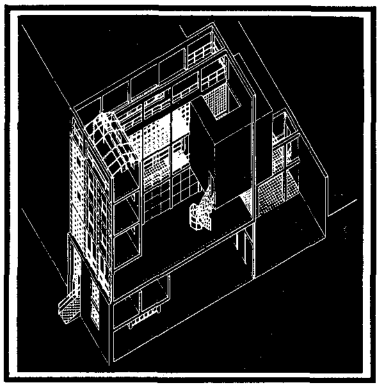
When the Crows killed a buffalo cow, they sometimes raped it. Crow men and women sometimes made love in public, in broad daylight. The Cheyenne were famous for their chastity. Many Cheyenne women belonged to a housewives' guild, which taught domestic arts and decoration. Cheyenne women got together and bragged of their tanning or decorating feats the way the men bragged of feats of war. Many pieces of Cheyenne hide decoration and beadwork survive in modern museums. The Plains Crees never washed their clothes, just bought new ones at the trader's twice a year. The Blackfeet, when their leather shirts got dirty, repainted them. The Blackfeet let each thumbnail grow long, until it crooked like a claw. They often made presents of their relatives' corpses to whites. Cheyenne men, as an exercise in spiritual devotion, sometimes stood on a hill from sunrise to sunset without moving except to keep their faces turned to the sun, or stood in water up to their necks all day. The Crows chopped joints off their fingers in mourning so often that they hardly had a whole hand among them. The men generally saved their thumbs and one or two trigger fingers.

Sioux medicine men collected tiny, glistening pebbles from ant hills and used them in medicine rattles. The Hidatsa rushed eagerly into hailstorms and gathered hailstones to cool their tepid Missouri River drinking water. The Mandan and others loved European toys. The Cheyenne at one time painted their arrows blue, in reference to the waters of a sacred lake in the Black Hills. Cheyenne warriors put on their best clothes and painted themselves and rebraided their hair before going into battle; if they didn't have time to, they ran away. Whenever the Assiniboin sent each other presents of food, they also sent along a little boy to bring back the dish. The Assiniboin cleaned their pipes with pointed sticks decorated with porcupine quills, which they carried stuck in their hair. The Sioux might eat a dead horse, but would never kill one for food. The Kiowa, when moving from a campground they especially liked, would leave strings of beads or little pouches behind as "gifts to the place." The Osages were said to be the best-looking of the plains tribes; Maria Tallchief, the ballerina who became the third wife of the Russian-born choreographer George Balanchine, is half Osage. Balanchine once said that by marrying her he had at last become truly American.

The Arikara, also called the Rees, lived on the Missouri River in earth lodges like the Mandan and the Hidatsa. According to reports of traders, the Arikara stuck their hair together with gum, clay, grease, and paint, had many large lice that they picked off one another and crushed between their teeth, practiced incest, communicated venereal diseases to their children, filled the spaces between their lodges with garbage, killed lone white men indiscriminately, were horse thieves and poor warriors, shot you with one hand while shaking hands with the other, gambled and smoked all winter, spent the summers sleeping, catching catfish, and chasing each other's wives, and caused neighboring tribes on the Missouri to move away from them. Among the traders, the Arikara were known as the Horrid Tribe. What the Arikara called the traders is not recorded. Many nineteenth-century white observers liked to list Indian vices, sometimes switching to Latin when the subject was sex. That the Indians who were easiest to observe tended to be the ones most affected by white trade apparently never occurred to them.



The Comanche, who probably killed more settlers than any other American Indians did, made a distinction among whites between Texans and all others. Then, as now, it was possible to tell the difference. Texans rode big Kentucky horses, did not parley or give presents, wore homespun clothes dyed butternut, and were trigger-happy. The Comanche hated Texans the most of all. The Comanche were a whirlwind on horseback but awkward on foot. They were small and bandy-legged, the jockeys of the plains. Comanche raids against Spanish towns in Mexico kept the plains supplied with horses and discouraged Spain from expanding her empire north. The Comanche had a lot to do, indirectly, with the development of the handgun. The first time the Texas Rangers used Samuel Colt's new revolving pistol in a fight with Comanche was the first time they whipped them. The revolver was the perfect horseback weapon against an enemy who could shoot twenty arrows and ride three hundred yards in a minute. It amazed the Comanche, who remembered that encounter for generations. The Rangers made suggestions to help Colt improve his gun, and gave him his first fame. The Comanche prided themselves on their stealth. They had a story about a tribesman who stole a sleeping woman from her husband's side so quietly that neither woke. They often took captives during their raids, and sometimes raised them in the tribe. Women captives had an especially miserable time; even if they were rescued, they usually did not live long. The Comanche enjoyed torturing prisoners. After a day of torture, when they wanted to get some sleep, they would cut the prisoners' tongues out. The Comanche thought the roadrunner was a good-luck charm, and hung its skin in their tipis. They also made fans of the tail feathers of the scissortail flycatcher, which they wore at the shoulder like epaulets. When the Army sent troops after them in the winter of 1874, and the Comanche lost



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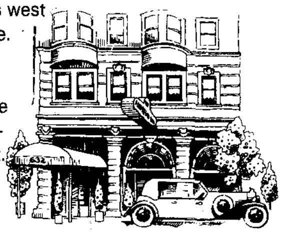

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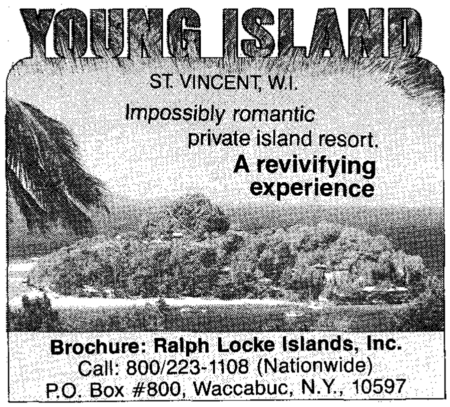

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many women and children, they surrendered their horses and guns and moved to reservations.

Indians ate young, fat dogs (killed, singed, scraped of hair, gutted, beheaded, boiled, served unaccompanied—a delicacy), ants (scooped from anthills in the cool of the morning, washed, crushed to paste, made into soup), grasshoppers (taken in drives, then dried, boiled, or roasted), beaver tails (cut into small slices, boiled with prairie turnips until very tender—another delicacy), wild peas (robbed from the caches of field mice, boiled with fat meat), chokecherries (stones and all, with a noise "fully as loud as horses eating corn," according to one observer), rose pods (pounded, mixed with bone grease), buffalo berries, wild plums, turtle eggs, serviceberries, wild artichokes, morning-glory roots, cottonwood bark, wild onions, juneberries. They would eat a wild turkey only when they were near starvation. They did not eat many trout, although the soldiers who fought them caught and ate thousands. Indians thought eating pork was disgusting; some believed that the federal inspection stamp was in fact a tattoo and the meat was white man.

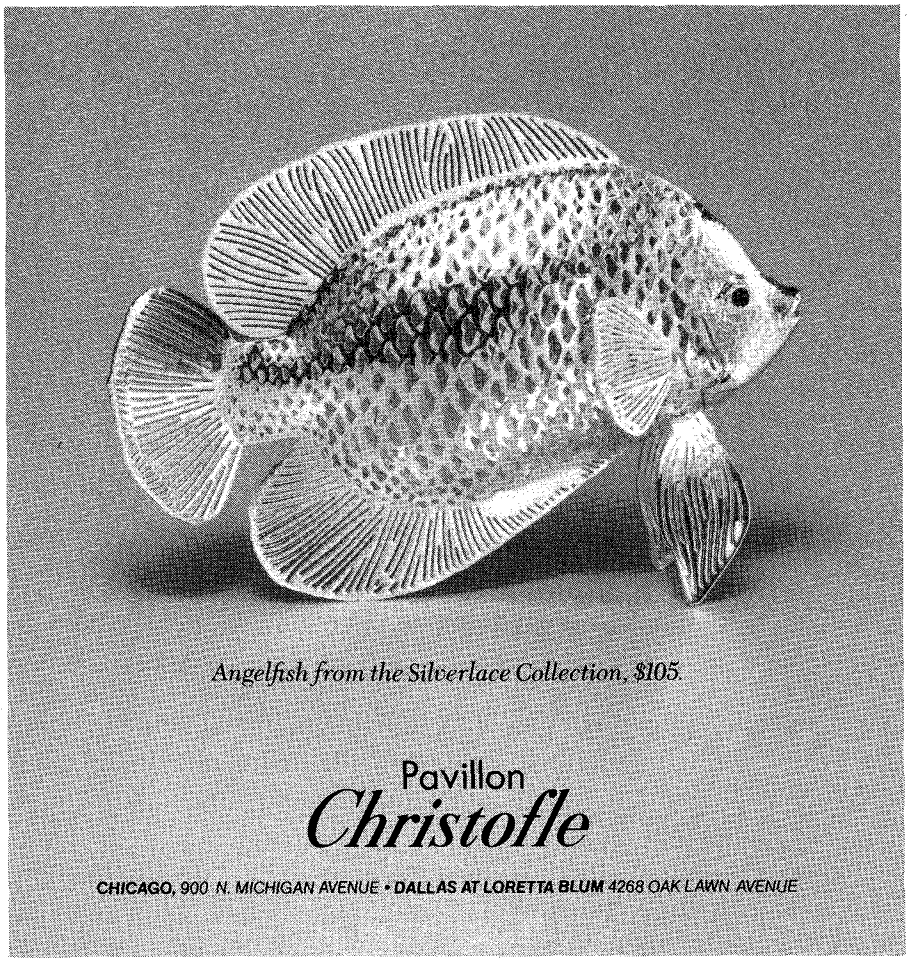
Of course, Indians mainly ate buffalo. There were maybe seventy million buffalo on the plains before white men came. Before the horse, Indians hunted buffalo by chasing them over blind cliffs (called buffalo jumps), up box canyons, or into steep-sided sand dunes, where the animals' cloven hoofs would flounder. Horses made hunting buffalo much easier. An Indian who chased a buffalo and killed it with a lance or an arrow might, if he was hungry, cut it open on the spot and eat the warm liver seasoned with bile from the gallbladder. The women followed to do the butchering, and could slice the meat as thin as paper. When it was hung on racks, the plains wind and sun dried it, and then it would last for months. The Comanche liked to kill young buffalo calves and eat the curdled, partly digested milk from the stomach. The Assiniboin made a dish of buffalo blood boiled with brains, rosebuds, and hide scrapings. The Arikara retrieved from the Missouri drowned buffalo so putrefied they could be eaten with a spoon. With stone mallets, Indians cracked buffalo bones to get at the marrow. There were cuts of buffalo just as there are of beef; the Hidatsa had names for twenty-seven different cuts. The Sioux boiled buffalo meat with heated rocks in a buffalo paunch, and then ate the paunch, too. Roasted fat-hump ribs, boiled tongue, and coffee was a meal Indians dreamed about. Buffalo meat did not make you feel full. Some Indians could eat fifteen pounds of buffalo meat at a sitting.

Among the Indians, no part of the buffalo was ever wasted—except sometimes, when a tribe might kill a herd of fourteen hundred and cut out the tongues to take to the traders for whiskey, or when a war party on enemy hunting grounds would shoot animals and leave them on the ground to rot. White people were likely to kill buffalo for fun. Noblemen from the British Isles made long safari-like hunting expeditions on the plains and killed thousands. Early travellers on the Oregon Trail hunted when they got a chance, and the buffalo split into two herds, the northern and the southern, to avoid them. Nobody in history, however, consumed buffalo the way the railroads did. Between 1867 and 1880, the Union Pacific, the Kansas Pacific, the Northern Pacific, and the Santa Fe all reached the Great Plains. The remaining buffalo—maybe thirty or forty million—disappeared up the tracks like water up a straw.

Not that any industry was crying out for buffalo products at the time. Fresh buffalo meat was hard to ship, because it would not travel except in the cold months. Buffalo hams and tongues were complicated to smoke or salt. The easiest part of the buffalo to move was the hide. All you had to do was shoot the buffalo, skin him, scrape the flesh from the hide, and peg the hide out on the ground to dry. You were left with a hard, flat thing with hair on one side, a thing that could be stacked and baled and loaded in freight cars. When these hides (called flint hides) arrived in the East, they proved more difficult than cowhide to tan commercially. But since the hides were cheap tanners soon solved the problem. Tanned buffalo leather is too soft and pliant to use for shoes or belts or harnesses, but it makes excellent buffing rags. Tanneries eventually bought hides by the million. In New York, the price of a buffalo hide went from a dollar and twenty-five cents to three-fifty in just a few years. From the railheads, professional buffalo hunters fanned out across the plains.

These hunters preferred to be called buffalo runners, but they did not chase buffalo and shoot them from horseback. Once they found a herd, they sneaked up to within rifle range on foot. Some wore kneepads to help them crawl. Then they set their sixteen-pound guns on a rest of crossed hardwood sticks and shot buffalo one after another with bullets an inch long and half an inch across. Many buffalo hunters used the fifty-calibre Sharps rifle, which could kill a buffalo bull from hundreds of yards away. The hunters tried to kill as many animals as possible in one spot, for the convenience of their partners who did the skinning. Buffalo hunters usually worked in parties of four, with one shooter, two skinners, and one hide stretcher and cook. Everybody wanted to be the shooter. On a busy day, the guns heated up quickly. If the hunter had no water to pour on the barrel, he might urinate on it. Many skinners used mules to pull the hides off. At night, the men sometimes got out a fiddle and pegged down a dry buffalo hide and danced on it. They wore heavy clothes, which they seldom changed. Dried blood caked in their beards. When a group of them walked up to a bar, they would reach into their clothes, and the last one to catch a louse had to buy. The prostitutes who catered to them were a special type.

The years when railroads first crossed the plains are when most Western novels and movies and TV shows take place. Those years are what people mean when they talk about "the Wild West." The Army was fighting the Indians winter and summer trying to force them onto reservations, and eventually it more or less succeeded. The buffalo were disappearing, and buffalo hunters had millions of dollars to spend. General Phil Sheridan, commander of the Army's Department of the Southwest, applauded the hunters for "destroying the Indians' commissary." He said, "Let them kill, skin, and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated. Then your prairies can be covered with speckled cattle and the festive cowboy." Newspaper editors in the new towns along the cattle trails got a kick out of the phrase "the festive cowboy," and used it often in their accounts of shootings and brawls. Even before the buffalo were gone, cowboys were driving thousands of cattle north



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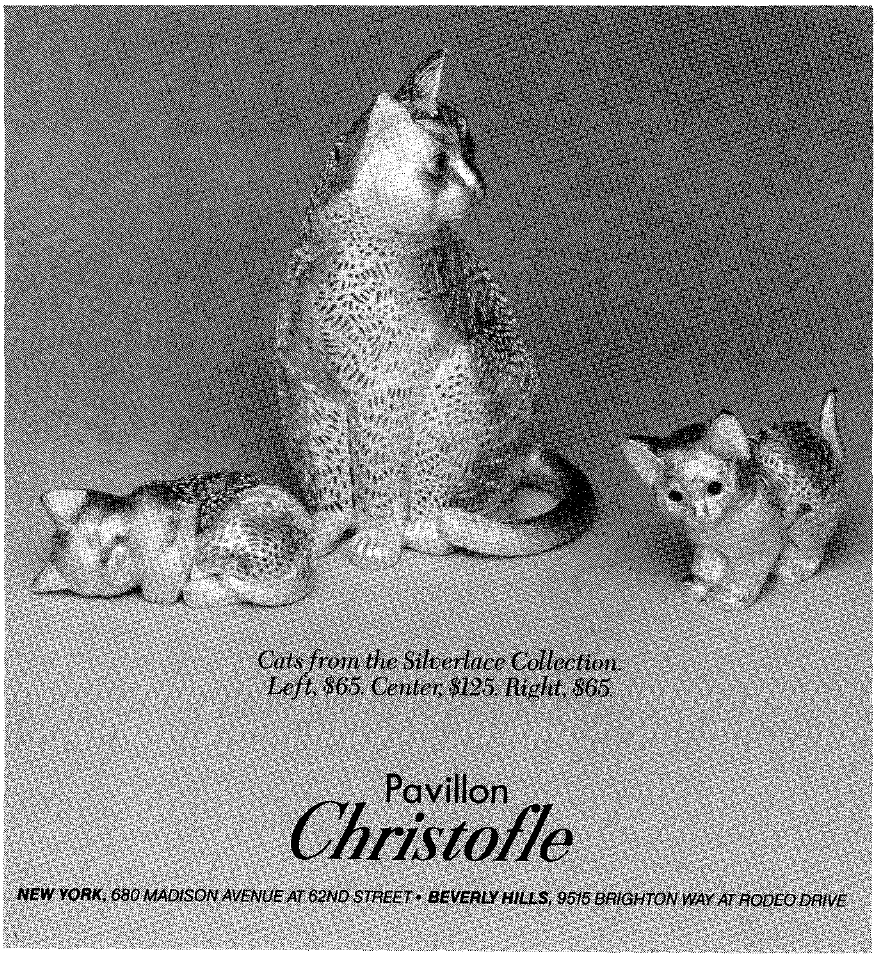

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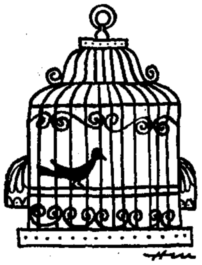
from Texas to railroad shipping points, or to summer ranges, or to Indian agencies. By 1880, the thousands had become hundreds of thousands. Most of the cattle were Texas longhorns, a breed descended from cattle brought to the New World by the Spanish in the sixteenth century. The longhorns' ancestors were runaways that grew up wild in the brushy bottoms of south Texas. In just a few centuries, they evolved horns up to four feet long and an uncowlike fierceness. Texans and Indians hunted them like game, sometimes getting killed in the process, because longhorns were skilled at ambushing people in the brush. When the railroads provided a market for beef, the six million longhorns running loose in Texas were suddenly worth something. Cowboys drove them from the brush and herded them north. Steers that were wild and unwilling sometimes had their eyes sewn shut with linen thread. By the time the thread rotted, the animal was usually tame. Longhorns were dangerous to cowboys and horses and one another, and so skittish that a man striking a match at night could put them into a stampede, but they were also strong travellers, with long legs and an ability to cover miles without water. Each steer had a travelling partner that it walked with every day. Longhorns were skinny and dusty, of many dun colors—mulberry blue, cream, red, yellow, ring-streaked—and their meat was stringy. Sometimes, after months on the trail, they would keep on walking around and around in the freight-yard pens for a week or so after they arrived.



Meanwhile, in the nearby saloons, the cowboys who had brought them drank and acted crazy. Cowboys were often kids who had grown up hungry in Texas during the Civil War. They had names like Bump Miskimmins and Real Hamlet (first name Real, last name Hamlet). At night, on the trail, they used the rotation of the Big Dipper around the North Star to tell when their watch was over, and rubbed tobacco juice in their eyes to keep awake. They sang a song about the trail, and every river they crossed—the Nueces, the Colorado, the Red, the Washita, and on up—had its own verse. They liked canned food, a new convenience at the time. Fads swept them; one day a cowboy named Charlie Colcord appeared on the streets of Medicine Lodge, Kansas, carrying a toothbrush, and soon every cowboy had one sticking from his vest pocket. Just as the cowboys were often from the South, so the saloonkeepers and marshals and livery-store owners and railroad brakemen and small farmers they met along the way were often former Yankees. Fights tended to be at distances where the flame from one man's pistol would set the wadding of the other man's coat on fire.

People with money back East and in Europe quickly realized that the Great Plains cleared of Indians and buffalo meant endless acres of free grass. English lords, Irish dukes, Scottish linen manufacturers, Boston bank presidents, Edinburgh lawyers, St. Louis shoe manufacturers, the Cunard family, actors from New York and Chicago invested in cattle ranches bigger than Eastern states. The Earl of Aberdeen and Baron Tweedmouth founded the Rocking Chair Ranche, which took up much of the Texas Panhandle. Its offices were at 25 Piccadilly, London. The English-owned XIT Ranch had an English foreman whose name was Walter de S. Maud. By 1884, foreign interests controlled more than twenty million acres of Great Plains ranchlands. Many rich people came west to oversee their ranches themselves: East Coast Biddles and Aldriches and Sturgises, Winston Churchill's Aunt Clara (wife of the English-born cattleman Moreton Frewen), Baron Walter von Richthofen (grandfather of the First World War ace), Teddy Roosevelt (recovering from the death of his wife; he told friends he would never be happy again), and a Frenchman named Antoine Amédée Marie Vincent Amat Manca de Vallombrosa, Marquis de Morès. "I am weary of civilization; I long for wilderness; I want an absolute contrast to the old life," the Marquis said. He bought ranchland in the valley of the Little Missouri River in North Dakota and built a big house on a bluff. His wife, Medora von Hoffman, of New York, brought along silver hairbrushes in sets of two, for either a right-handed or a left-handed lady's maid.

In general, the rich people had a lot of fun on the plains. They drove around in fancy traps and four-in-hands, raised polo ponies, experimented with new breeds of cattle, rode to the hounds after coyotes, fly-fished for trout, and imported oysters, fresh flowers, and opera companies. The opening of the Cheyenne, Wyoming, Opera House featured an opera titled "Olivette," with programs printed in blue on perfumed white satin. Teddy Roosevelt knocked down a man who was mean to him in a bar, and caught three men who stole a boat from him, and cheered up. Refrigerated steamships opened Europe to American beef, and people in England, especially, began to eat more of it, and some investors made a lot of money. A book called "The Beef Bonanza; or, How to Get Rich on the Plains," by General James S. Brisbin, explained, with many pages of figures, how an investment in the cattle business would double in five years and pay an annual dividend of ten per cent all the while. More money went into cattle, more cattle came to the plains. A De Kalb, Illinois, farmer named Joseph Glidden invented a kind of barbed wire that was easy to manufacture, and suddenly farmers had a way to build cheap fences on treeless land. The line of towns and smaller farms moved farther west.

Other ranchers on the plains were not rich. These men—former soldiers, miners, storekeepers, freighters, cowboys—were concerned about the big increase in rustling that came with the cattle boom. In Montana, they got together and formed a Vigilance Committee. Its members gave themselves new names, like X or No. 84. The railroads had killed off the steamboat trade, and all along the Missouri River the woodlots that had supplied the boats were deserted. Men with time on their hands took to living in the woodlots and thinking up ways to steal horses and cattle. Often these men were buffalo hunters, newly unemployed after killing off their profession. Members of the Vigilance Committee rode all over the state and into North Dakota looking for men they thought were rustlers. When they found them, they hanged them from barn beams, hay frames, pine trees, auction-corral gateposts, unfinished buildings, butcher's hoists, and balm of Gilead trees.

By 1886, cattle were overcrowding the range. That summer was dry. The winter that followed was so bad that accounts of it tend to be hour-by-hour: at about ten o'clock on the evening of

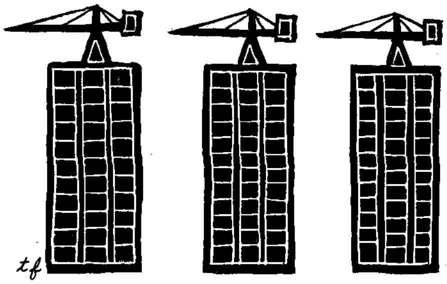
January 9th, the temperature began to drop; it dropped forty degrees in two hours; the wind picked up from the north; snow started to fall; it fell all night; when dawn came you couldn't see any but the faintest light, etc. One snowstorm followed another. In bad weather, buffalo usually faced into the wind until they found a hollow or a valley for shelter; cattle, with thinner coats, tend to travel with the wind. In the winter of '86-87, storms took cattle hundreds of miles. Some ranchers never found their herds at all. Most found them far to the south, piled up five and six deep in ravines, buried in drifts, drowned in rivers. Sixty per cent of the cattle in Montana died. Throughout the rest of the plains, the winter killed hundreds of thousands more. Ranchers sent their cowboys out to skin and bring back the hides.

Investors who had been making millions now lost millions. Ranches folded right and left. The rich people on the plains usually went elsewhere for the winters; after '86, few returned. Winston Churchill's uncle went back to England. Teddy Roosevelt counted the dead cattle on his land in the spring and never had much to do with ranching after that. The Marquis de Morès, who had wanted to build a transcontinental meat-packing empire, eventually lost about a million and a half dollars and went back to France. Later, he became involved in the French anti-Semitic movement, wounded a Jewish newspaper editor in a duel, killed a Jewish Army officer in another duel, and was himself robbed and killed by Tuareg tribesmen in North Africa while on a personal mission to forge a Franco-Islamic alliance against England and the Jews.

When the buffalo were slaughtered, they lay so thick on the ground that you could walk for miles on the bodies. After time passed, only the bones were left, and the railroads took those, too. Hundreds of trainloads were shipped from places like Dodge City, Kansas, and Miles City, Montana, to factories in the east, where the bones were used to make fertilizer and china. Ranchers who had not been upset to see dead buffalo everywhere were sickened by what the winter of '86 did to their cattle. Some gave up ranching entirely; some could never own a cow again. Those who stayed in business reduced their herd to numbers that they could more easily feed and take care of year round. The winter of '86 was the end of all but a few of the giant investor-owned ranches. It was also the end of people coming to the Great Plains in any numbers from far away just for the sake of adventure or fun.

I DROPPED Jim Yellow Earring off in the town of Bullhead, South Dakota. He asked me if I had a couple bucks I could lend him. I gave him a five. He started to ask for more, and I told him to look at the bill. He said, "*Oh!* You done better than I thought!" A station wagon loaded down to the road with Indians came by. The driver, a woman with a face so broad it seemed to fill the whole side window, gave me a dark look. Jim Yellow Earring asked me where I was going next. I told him Strasburg, North Dakota, the birthplace of the bandleader Lawrence Welk. He said, "Goddam! All right!" I asked him if he knew that Lawrence Welk was from Strasburg. He said everybody knew that. He said Lawrence Welk was one of the greatest people ever to come from around there.

I drove on for a while and then pulled off the road and slept in my van. The next morning was Sunday. In the café where I had breakfast, everybody was still dressed up for church. I heard a young waitress say to an older one, "I think I'm really gonna like these new hours I've got." I drove on through fields with nobody working in them. Gusts of wind crossed the wheat like messages across a Fan-O-Gram. The leaves of the cottonwoods along the road were dark green or khaki with dust. I turned off at the town of Hague, North Dakota. It had a Catholic church breathing cool church-smell through its open doors, a red firehouse, a grocery store, a grain elevator, a big Behlen quonset hut near the railroad tracks, a Knights of Columbus Hall, a bar called Lit'l Gillys, a Coke machine on the sidewalk, one-story houses with octagon clotheslines and eight or ten rows of corn in the back yards, a lawn sprinkler shaped like a little tractor in one front yard, a few cars angle-parked on the main street, and three blond kids bouncing on a mattress in the back of a pickup truck outside the café.



Hard to believe that one night more than sixty years ago, during a dance that had turned rowdy, someone hit Lawrence Welk over the head with a brick in Hague, North Dakota.

Strasburg, North Dakota, is fourteen miles away. Although both are small towns, everything about Strasburg seems to be one size bigger. Strasburg could be Hague's older brother. Like a number of benign towns on the northern plains, Strasburg has a public campground with a restroom and a free shower. I used it and shaved and changed my shirt. Then I found a shady place to park on Main Street and watched people walking by. Strasburg, a town of six hundred and twenty-three, also has a municipal swimming pool. Kids in bathing suits were walking along the sidewalk in that shivery way you walk after getting out of a swimming pool. Kids on their way to the pool clutched coins in one hand. Kids coming back left wet footprints on the sidewalk. A girl going said to a boy coming back, "Mom wants you home right now." In the distance were kids' swimming-pool shrieks, and the clink of somebody throwing horseshoes, and the Rolling Stones singing "Faraway Eyes" from speakers set out on a lawn.

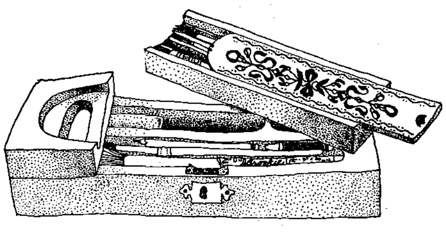
Lawrence Welk's family did not live in town; they lived on a farm three miles away. He was born there, on March 11, 1903, the seventh of eight children of Ludwig and Christina Welk. As a child, Lawrence was fascinated by his father's accordion, an heirloom that had come with the family from Europe. In the summer after fourth grade, Lawrence suffered a ruptured appendix, was driven to a hospital seventy miles away, in Bismarck, and nearly died. He spent seven weeks there and three months at home in bed with a drain in his side. As in the lives of many artists, illness revealed his vocation. During the year of his convalescence, his parents let him play his father's accordion as much as he wanted. He taught himself many tunes, and also went around discovering the sounds he could get from pitchforks, rain barrels, and anvils. After missing a year of school, he did not want to go back and be older than everybody in his class, so his parents let him stay home and work on the farm.

One winter, between chores, Lawrence ran trap lines, and with the earnings from his furs bought a fifteen-dollar mail-order accordion. Unequal to his enthusiasm, it soon broke. Lawrence was a big fifteen-year-old, and sometimes made money playing for dances in the Strasburg pool hall. He told his father that in return for the four hundred dollars he needed to buy a good accordion he would work on the farm until he was twenty-one, and give his father all the money he earned playing. His father agreed. The new accordion made him feel like a professional musician for the first time. He played many weddings, birthdays, and dances in and around Strasburg. He drove to jobs in a buggy, often returning home just in time to begin the morning's chores. When he was hit with the brick, he never told his parents.

The day after his twenty-first birthday, Lawrence left home to be a musician. His father said he would fail. He went to Aberdeen, South Dakota, because he had heard there was work for musicians there. He could not read music, and had trouble getting jobs. The worst moment of his life occurred after a dance in Oldham, South Dakota, when he overheard one of the other band members say, "Did you get a load of that accordionist? If I had to play every night with him, I'd go back to jerking sodas." After that, Lawrence practiced playing more softly, and tried to blend in better with the other instruments. After touring with several bands, he finally got a job playing every weekday morning on WNAX, in Yankton, South Dakota. It was the only radio station for miles, and Lawrence's band soon drew a following. One of the fans who often came by the studio to listen was a young woman named Fern Renner, a nurse at Sacred Heart Hospital. Lawrence asked her to go out with him many times, but she always refused. Finally, he decided to enter the hospital for minor surgery, in the hope of seeing more of her there. The tactic worked, and they were married in April of 1930.

In the thirties, Lawrence travelled all over with his band—to Tom Archer's Rigadoon Ballrooms, in Sioux City, Iowa, to O. K. Farr's Rainbow Ballroom, in Denver, to the Mirador Ballroom, in Phoenix, Arizona. When hiring band members, Lawrence always preferred less talented musicians of good character to brilliant musicians of unstable character. Once, he discouraged a band member from fooling around with a local girl by arranging for a policeman to pretend to arrest him on a paternity charge. The Depression had hurt the ballroom business, and Lawrence briefly owned a hotel in Dallas, an appliance store in Yankton, and a restaurant in Mason City, Iowa. The restaurant sold hot dogs and hamburgers in accordion-pleated boxes with pictures of band members on the side.

In 1936, the Welks moved to Omaha, where their second daughter was born. In 1938, the band got a job at the ballroom of the William Penn Hotel, in Pittsburgh. Many of the big hotels broadcast their Saturday-night shows over the radio, and someone at the local station suggested that the band bill itself as "Lawrence Welk and His Champagne Music." From then on, the band (now grown to an orchestra) played many big hotel ballrooms—the Edgewater Beach and the Agora, in Chicago; the Roosevelt, in New York; the St. Francis, in San Francisco. For ten years, their semi-permanent home was the Hotel Trianon ballroom, in Chicago. When they played the Aragon Ballroom, in Ocean Park, California, in 1951, the first TV station in Los Angeles, KTLA, began to broadcast the show, and it was such a hit that ABC decided to broadcast it nationally. The Welks, who had moved to River Forest, Illinois, moved to Brentwood, California. "The Lawrence Welk Show," sponsored by Dodge, premièred on ABC on July 16, 1955. Soon forty million people were watching it every Saturday night. Six thousand people a week sent letters and postcards. In 1957, the Lawrence Welk Orchestra played at President Eisenhower's Inaugural Ball. *Life* called Lawrence Welk "the most popular musician in U.S. history." Lawrence invested in real estate and golfed with Bob Hope. Comedians did impressions of him. On the subject of his music's appeal, he said, "We play not to please ourselves but the listeners. I simply have no use for those smart alecks who perform only for one another and ignore the public."



The doors of the Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Strasburg were open; the parking lot was empty. The town had worshipped, now it swam. Inside, the silence teemed. There was a smell of polished wood, hymnals, and rubber floor mats. The empty air was still vibrating slightly with the suppressed fidgets of children. Except for the pews and the floors, almost every interior surface was covered with statues or paintings. Two girl-size statues of angels holding fonts of holy water stood by the main door. The tall, narrow windows each had a saint in stained glass. Angels and Biblical scenes covered the ceiling. The altar had a crucified Christ in the center, statues of the Virgin Mary, St. Anne, St. Peter, St. Paul, the Last Supper, candles, scrolls, filigrees, more angels—a scene as colorful and crowded as the finale of the Radio City Easter Show. All the vents at the bottoms of the windows were open. At the front of the church, Emerson Seabreeze electric fans on wheeled stands faced the congregation.

Lawrence Welk's family sometimes battled snowdrifts to get to this church. In fact, if his parents had been less serious about their religion Lawrence Welk probably would not have been an American. Both of his parents were born on farms near the city of Strasbourg, in what was then called the Alsace-Lorraine region of France. After the Franco-Prussian War, in 1870, Prussia annexed Alsace-Lorraine and outlawed Catholicism. With other Catholics, the Welks moved to southern Russia, where they helped found a town called Strasburg. Their Catholicism was so different from the local Russian kind that the congregation was accused of heresy and had to move again. This time they came to America, to Strasburg, Pennsylvania, where people they knew from home had settled. But land was scarce in Pennsylvania, so they went on to the Dakotas and founded this Strasburg—the fourth one they had lived in.

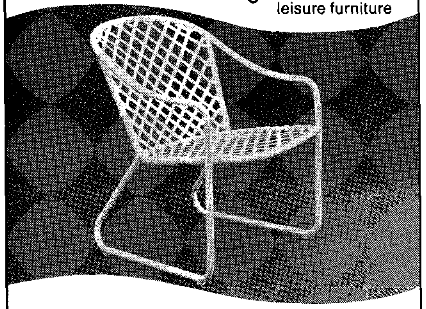
Tens of thousands of other German-speaking people came to the Great Plains to farm. This was partly because Americans encouraged them to. According to many nineteenth-century speechmakers, the settling of the West was just another chapter in the triumphal march of the indomitable Anglo-Saxon race. Germans were right for the job. The railroads, with tracks crossing hundreds of miles of empty prairie, had perhaps the most to gain from settlement. Railroad executives agreed with the popular notion that Germans made the best farmers in the world. All the Western roads sent promoters to Europe to persuade people to emigrate. (Most Western states did, too.) The Burlington Railroad thought so highly of Germans, and so little of French and Italians, that it printed advertising brochures in the first language but did not bother with the two others. Promoters were always watching for political changes that might produce refugees; in 1871, the Burlington directed a special pamphlet to the people of Alsace-Lorraine, suggesting the state of Nebraska as the perfect place to escape their oppressors.

All the promoters were at some pains to explain that land in the American West was free. Which it was, more or less. The Homestead Act of 1862 said that on surveyed but unclaimed public land any citizen or intended citizen could claim a quarter section—a hundred and sixty acres—and own it outright after living on it and improving it for a period of five years. The homesteader needed a small filing fee, and a much larger amount of cash to survive until the farm got going. Of course, most of the land available for homesteading was far from the railroad lines, because the government had given the railroads large grants of land along their rights-of-way to finance construction. And because the railroads often followed river valleys not many homestead acres lay in well-watered bottomlands.

The idea behind the Homestead Act was that a nation of small, independent farmers would make the best foundation for democracy. It was an idea as old as the United States. In the years just before the Civil War, politicians from the North wanted to fill the West with farmers on hundred-and-sixty-acre homesteads to stop the spread of slavery. The Homestead Act finally passed during the war, when the South could no longer object. Unfortunately, the hundred-and-sixty-acre homestead, as well as the larger ones provided for in later legislation, turned out to be wrong for the Great Plains. To expect a person to make a living on a little square of this vast region where animals and Indians used to travel hundreds of miles looking for food, where clouds slide all over before the winds, where you have to import many necessities—it was like expecting a fisherman to survive on just a little square of ocean.

The central plains were where the first railroads crossed, so they were the first to be settled. The northern plains between the Missouri River and the Canadian border had no railroad until 1889, and people were still filing first-time homestead claims in northern Montana through the nineteen-twenties. Homesteading the plains might not have been possible at all without the invention of barbed wire for fencing and of a windmill that reduced its blade surface in high winds to keep from blowing apart. As ingenious as either of these was a public-relations device that some scientists, college professors, United States Geological Survey officials, and railroad promoters came up with. This device was the meteorological theory that "rain follows the plow." According to this theory, cultivation of the soil, human activity, steam from railroad engines—all the developments that accompany settlement—produce increased rainfall. The Santa Fe Railroad went as far as to identify the "rainline," the front edge of this advancing rainfall, which supposedly moved at a rate of about eighteen miles a year, staying just ahead of the new settlements.

Another theory favored by the railroads and their experts taught that deep cultivation of the soil conserved moisture, so the homesteaders broke up virgin sod undisturbed since the last Ice Age and plowed furrows twelve and eighteen inches deep. As it turned out, rain did not follow the plow any more than it followed anything else. Some farmers made enough money to buy more land and survive drought years and stay in business. Many thousands of homesteaders ended up owning farms on the Great Plains. But an even larger number went broke, lost their crops to grasshoppers, saw their fields dry up and blow away, went into debt, went crazy with loneliness, sold out, left, and never came back. Homesteads in particularly unpromising parts of the plains often saw dozens and dozens of would-be owners over the



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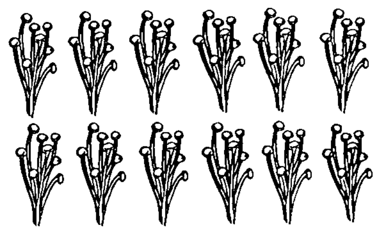

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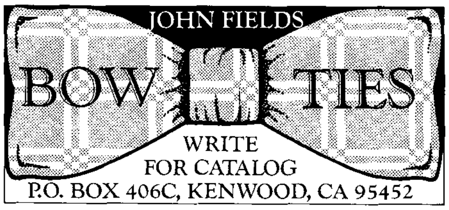

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years before the message finally got through. Farmers and ranchers are still going out of business on the plains today.

The early homesteaders used dried buffalo droppings for fuel, carted buffalo bones to the railroads for cash, and cleaned the buffalo off the plains so thoroughly that today a buffalo bone is a rare find. Abandoned farmhouses, on the other hand, are everywhere. From Canada to Texas, they are a constant of the landscape. Sometimes when I drove by one in the middle of blank prairie, I would make myself stop and take a look. About five miles from Winifred, Montana, I climbed a barbed-wire gate with a "No Hunting" sign on it and walked up to a cabin made of eight-inch cottonwood logs. It had two intact stone chimneys, green shingles, a boarded-up door, window frames with no windows. My heart sped up; as I got close enough to see how tight the hand-hewn carpentry was, I felt more and more like a trespasser. I stuck my head through a window, and instantly several swallows dive-bombed out past me. I hit the dirt and lay there panting. Finally, I stepped through the window. The hardwood floor was spotted with droppings but was still in fine shape. Someone had laid it as tight as the floor of a gym. I could see the blue sky through a small hole in the roof. The walls were plastered, and in the front room the white wallpaper had a red geometric pattern in a faded Art Deco design.

Whenever you see an abandoned house, you wonder. Usually, I was too shy to stop the car and go closer. The way a man in Texas looked at me when he drove up the driveway of an abandoned house as I was peering through the window and writing in my notebook ("Busted air conditioner/empty Field Trial High Protein Dog Food bags/electric-fence transformer/pair of white water skis in corner") gave me an idea of the way the ghosts in these houses might look at me if they existed and could take shape for a moment. Behind the wheel of his pickup truck, the man was one big question mark: Why in the world did I want to nose around the house where (as it turned out) he had grown up? We talked for a few minutes, and the mild complete puzzlement never left his face. As my van pulled out of the driveway, it slunk.

Most of the abandoned farms—the driveways lined with double rows of cottonwoods sometimes leading to nothing, the spavined barns, bladeless windmills, crumpled stock tanks, tree-sheltered homeplaces with the home missing, fallen-down corrals, splintered stock chutes, rusting farm machinery—I saw from the road, at sixty miles an hour. A friend of mine in Montana who had grown up on the plains lent me a centennial history of his county, "The Wonder of Williams: A History of Williams County, North Dakota." (Williams happens to be the county that includes the Fort Union site and much of the Yellowstone-Missouri-confluence area.) This book, published by the Williams County Historical Society, has a chapter on every township in the county, with a list of the families who live there. Many chapters end with a section titled "Others.Who Were Here." Sometimes in the evenings in a motel room, after a day of passing abandoned farms, I would read from "Others Who Were Here":

ELLA SPAWN proved up on her homestead in fourteen months and then sold it. Her parents owned a cafe in Williston. She married Rush Blankenship.

THORSTIEN ODDEN homesteaded 80 acres in Section 33. A single man who came from Norway, he loved to play his Hardanger violin. He refused to help with the threshing because he thought the fork handle would stiffen his fingers. . . .

GULLICK GULLIKSON came from Numesdal, Norway, about 1910. He homesteaded in Barr Butte, stayed for a short time, then went back to Norway where he operated a trucking business.

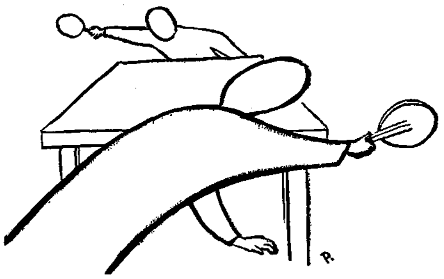
CHARLEY BURKE was a coal miner. He was smothered in Billy Kirk's mine when a prairie fire ignited the straw at the entry to the mine. All efforts to save him failed. His faithful dog was with him and also smothered.

WILLYS IRVING was the town boxer. . . .

E. J. BURNS came from Missouri and homesteaded. He was an attorney and wrote poetry. A poem he wrote during World War I was entitled "Wave Flag, Wave." He wrote many others.

MARTIN LARSON homesteaded, then moved to Washington. He was said to have money but lived like a hermit.

OLE OLSON HALLING homesteaded in Section 1. When he left the homestead he rode his pony to Cooperstown. He died there. . . .



C. D. HELMS homesteaded in 1904 or '05. They lived here until 1925. There is no record of what happened to the family.

ANDREW EDWARDSON BOLI homesteaded in 1909. He lived on the homestead only a short time, then went back east.

GILBERT FUNKHOUSER came from Virginia in 1907. He was never married and passed away in 1921.

MARTIN ROSSING homesteaded in Bonetraill in 1909 but he stayed there only a couple years. He used to play the violin.

JIM KENNEDY, who homesteaded, was a veteran of the Spanish-American War. He later moved to Toledo, Ohio.

BEECHER LEACH came to North Dakota with his parents in 1906 from Missouri. He remained unmarried his entire life. . . .

STELLA SWAB homesteaded in East Fork sometime before 1914. She married a druggist and later they moved to Red Lodge, Montana. . . .

CONRAD WESTKEMPER—His son became a priest. Reports are they went to Florida.

ENOC SAMUELSON—Sold out and went to Minot to work on the railroad.

JULIUS SMITH—Sold his land to Oliver Haugen and went back to Sweden.

ROBERT A. SMITH—A negro who worked out for others digging rocks. He is remembered by some for his fried bread doughs, which were called "Bob Smiths" . . .

HENRY BOGSTI—Had $10 and a saddle horse when he came here. He sold out, went to Wildrose, and worked in an elevator. His son was killed in a flax bin.

JOHN SONNENS—Conrad Westkemper got his homestead. Some remember how Mrs. Sonnens shocked all the grain, topping each shock with two bundles.

HANS BREKTO—Came from Wisconsin. Remembered by having no damper in his stove pipe . . .

OLOUS P. LINDSTEDT—Olous and his son, Albert, came to this area from Hillsboro or Caledonia. One day Olous rode a mule over to Ed Haugen's and when Marie asked him to have dinner with them, he said, "You don't have to ask me twice."

HENRY AND SARAH WINDEL both homesteaded. Sarah must have been a sister or wife of Henry. His land belonged to her for many years.

OLIVER FEDGE was a bachelor. He left by 1916.

HANSENA OLSON was single when she homesteaded. Somebody came along and married her and she ended up in Canada.

OLE HEEN (no relation to Lars) was called "Goliath." He choked to death on meat in a cafe in Ray some years ago . . .

EMIL PERSON was tall and lean. He had so many pictures of women on the walls of his claim shack they overlapped. . . .

A. B. SMITH, known as "Saleratus," lived quietly to himself and always carried a pistol. Why? Nobody knew. He got his name from his menu: Saleratus bread, boiled potatoes, bacon, and bacon grease for butter and gravy.

PETER KARLSRUD put in the minimum time to prove up his claim. He was a grain buyer and bought grain for some years in Scobey, Montana.

MARTHA FORGAARD, an excellent dressmaker, later moved to Canada.

OLE INGLADSON died in the flu epidemic in 1918.

VICTOR BERQUIST, a bachelor, came in 1905. One evening in the spring of 1923, after visiting a neighbor's home, he walked away and disappeared. His homestead shack showed no signs of his having prepared to leave. Everything was left exactly the way it had been. A group of neighbors searched for him, but no sign of him was ever found.

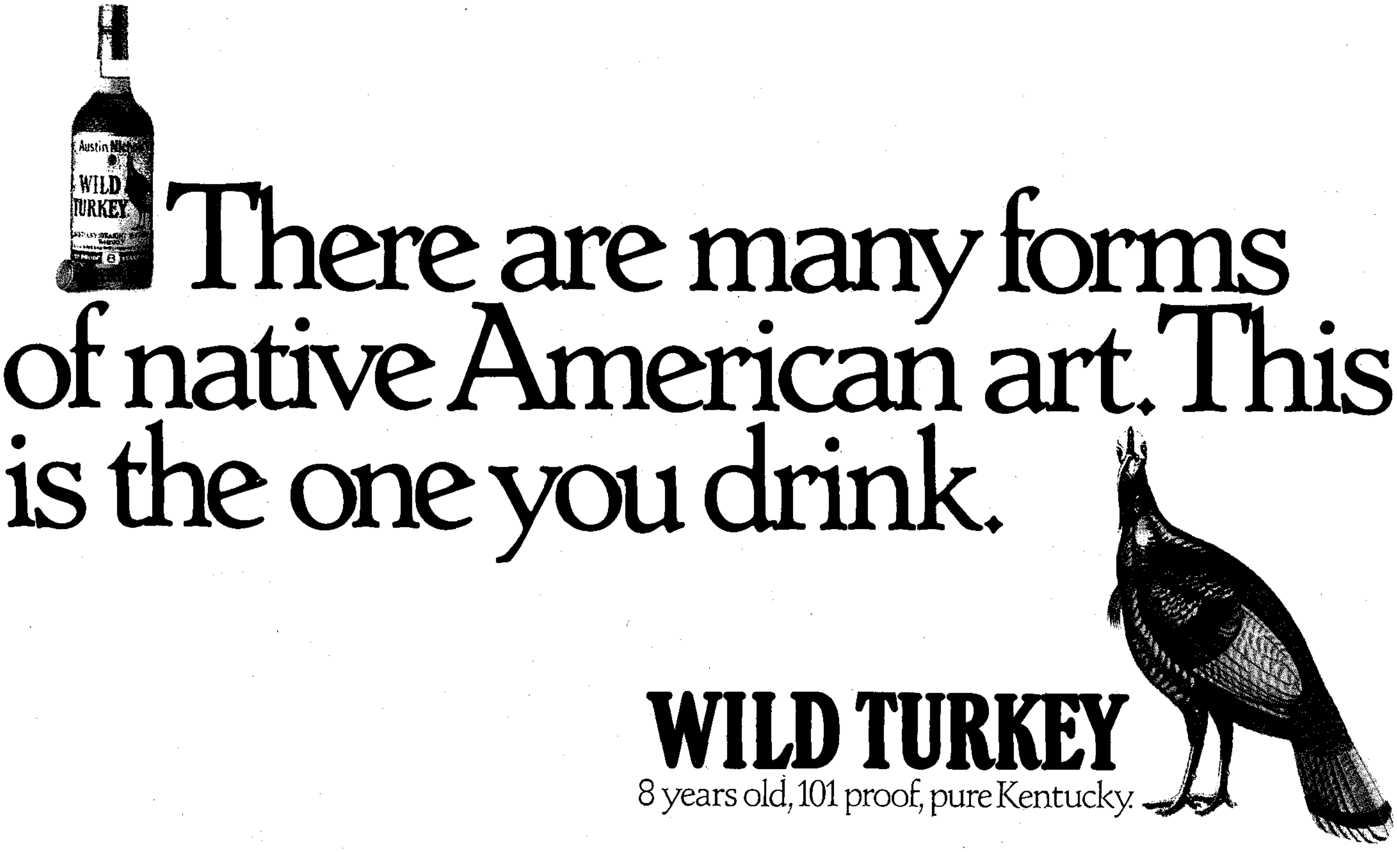
Sometimes an abandoned house has enough minor fame that it is mentioned on a historical marker near it on the highway. Just before a bridge on U.S. Highway 83 north of Wellington, Texas, I pulled over to read this marker:

> THE RED RIVER PLUNGE
> OF BONNIE AND CLYDE
>
> On June 10, 1933, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Pritchard and family saw from their home on the bluff (west) the plunge of an auto into Red River. Rescuing the victims, unrecognized as Bonnie Parker and Clyde and Buck Barrow, they sent for help. Upon their arrival, the local sheriff and police chief were disarmed by Bonnie Parker. Buck Barrow shot Pritchard's daughter while crippling the family car to halt pursuit. Kidnapping the officers, the gangsters fled. Bonnie and Clyde were fated to meet death in 1934. In this quiet region, the escape is now legend.

In the town of Lutie, a few miles up the road, I found out that the house was not "on the bluff (west)" but on a little rise just above the marker. I went back and pulled into the weedy drive. The house, long abandoned, still had walls and a roof. I crossed the back stoop, a slab of concrete with small dog footprints in it. The kitchen floor was floral-print linoleum now cracked like old oil paint, covered with wrecked-house mast of junk plaster, broken crockery, a rusted Mohawk-canned-ham can. Long strips of ceiling lath sheared down into the rooms. The kitchen wallpaper was a design of flowers and leaves in vases; in the living room, the wallpaper had red and white blossoms, light-green leaves with dark-brown stems, a silver background. Even the pantry had flowered wallpaper. I imagined this place on a summer night, with June bugs against the window screens, lamplight, a man reading the paper, a woman doing the dishes, music on the radio; then—Bonnie and Clyde.

Bonnie Parker was tiny—four feet ten inches, eighty-five pounds. Clyde Barrow was five seven, a hundred and twenty-seven pounds. The night they were here, she was twenty-two, he was twenty-four. (Buck Barrow, Clyde's brother, was twenty-eight.) Clyde always drove fast, which was probably why they missed a detour sign and crashed into the river. They also liked to drive far. Frank Hamer, the special investigator for the Texas prison system and former Texas Ranger who followed Bonnie and Clyde for a hundred and two days before setting up the ambush in which they were killed, said that Clyde "thought nothing of driving a thousand miles at a stretch." He said he once traced them as far east as North Carolina, where all they did was visit a cigarette factory and turn around. The officers they kidnapped at this house were Sheriff Dick Corry and Marshal Paul Hardy, who were taken into Oklahoma, handcuffed together, and tied to trees with barbed wire cut from a fence. In a crime spree of over two years, Bonnie and Clyde kidnapped many other people, robbed many small-town businesses, and killed nine law officers, two grocers, and one lumber salesman.

Clyde had on his right arm the tattoo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of a girl, and the name "Grace." Bonnie had on the inside of her right thigh a tattoo of two hearts joined by an arrow, with "Bonnie" in one heart and "Roy" in the other. They kept a white rabbit, and took it with them on their travels. Clyde also brought along his saxophone and sheet music. Bonnie read true-romance magazines, painted her toenails pink, and dyed her hair red to match her red hats, dresses, and shoes. When Frank Hamer and other Texas and Louisiana lawmen shot them to pieces on a road near Plain Dealing, Louisiana, Bonnie was wearing two diamond rings, one gold wedding ring, a small wristwatch, a three-acorn brooch, and a chain with a cross around her neck. Congress passed a resolution thanking Frank Hamer for his part in ending Bonnie and Clyde's career. He was also awarded their guns. Collectors offered a lot of money for the guns. Both Bonnie's mother and Clyde's mother wrote indignant letters to Frank Hamer, demanding that he turn over their children's guns to them.

In front of the house was an old slippery-elm tree—once a friendly tree in a yard, now just a tree—with big roots knuckling up through the ground. The roots were skinned and smooth from people sitting on them, and on the bare dirt in between I spotted a silver-and-purple tube of Wet 'n Wild lipstick. The tube was fresh, the stick still a little ice-cream-coned at the edges, of a shade of reddish pink that its manufacturer calls Fuchsia Pearl. I thought about the kids who dropped it. They probably come here sometimes to park and make out. Bonnie Parker would have been happy to find this lipstick. She would have opened it and sniffed it and tried the color on the back of her hand. As I examined it, my own hand seemed for a moment as ghostly as hers. I made a mark on a page of my notebook with the lipstick, recapped the tube, and put it back on the ground.

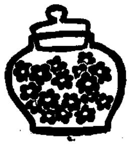
YOU can find all kinds of ruins on the Great Plains; in dry regions, things last a long time. When an enterprise fails on the plains, people usually just walk away and leave it. With empty land all around, there is not much reason to tear down and rebuild on the same site. In the rest of America, you are usually within range of the sound of hammers. A building comes down, another goes up, and soon it is hard to remember what used to be there. Nowadays, the past seems almost nonexistent, even contemptible: on TV, the cop says to the criminal, "Reach for that gun and you're history." But, for many places on the Great Plains, the past is much more colorful and exciting and populous than the present. Historical markers are everywhere. In many towns I stopped in, the public buildings were a store, a gas station, and a museum.

The Great Plains have plenty of room for the past. Often, as I drove around, I felt as if I were in an enormous time park. Near Medicine Bow, Wyoming, I visited a rock shop made entirely of fossilized dinosaur bones. Just north of the shop is Como Bluff, a low ridge about six miles long, which was the site of one of the world's classic discoveries of dinosaur and early-mammal fossils. During the Jurassic period, from a hundred and ninety million to a hundred and thirty-six million years ago, when seas advanced and retreated over much of the Great Plains, the rocks of Como Bluff were sediments at the edge of a coastal plain. Animals that died in rivers upstream tended to wash down there. By the end of the Jurassic, many bones had become fossils in deposits of clay and sandstone. Fossils are harder to remove intact from sandstone than from clay. As it happened, a number of geologic circumstances combined at Como Bluff to preserve thousands of fossils in clay deposits at or near the surface. Fossil bones were just lying around in the open. In 1877, some years after the railroad came through, a station agent for the Union Pacific and his section foreman wrote to Professor O. C. Marsh, of Yale University, about the bones they had found. Professor Marsh sent one of his collectors out, and later identified the odd, multi-pronged object that someone at the station had tied to a rope to keep a horse from wandering as the fossilized tail weapon of a stegosaurus. Professor Marsh eventually took almost five hundred ton-size wooden boxes of bones from the Como Bluff quarries. The brontosaurus in New Haven's Peabody Museum is from there. Discoveries on the Great Plains were the basis for much of our modern knowledge of dinosaurs. More than half the specimens in the dinosaur rooms of the American Museum of Natural History come from the American or Canadian plains.

On a dirt road on a cattle ranch, also in Wyoming, a rancher reached over and opened the glove compartment of his pickup and showed me dozens of worked pieces of stone, which were rattling around with fence pliers, staples, binoculars, and candy wrappers. Some of the stones were oval, some were thumb-shaped, some appeared to be fragments of projectile points. The rancher said, "A guy came up here from Denver a while ago and said he wanted to look for artifacts on our land, and I asked what kind of artifacts, and he said, 'Early-man tools.' We all thought that was pretty funny—whenever we'd need a rock for something, we'd say, 'Hey, hand me one o' them early-man tools.' Then one day the guy comes down off the ridge and he's got this beautiful spear-point about six inches long. Ever since, I've been keeping my eye on the ground, and picking up chippings and points and hide scrapers all over the place. Some of these rocks, I don't even know what they were, but I know they were something."

The oldest human remains found so far on the Great Plains date from the end of the last Ice Age—about twelve thousand years ago. Archeologists divide the early inhabitants into elephant hunters and bison hunters. Elephant hunters came first, and used a distinctive type of stone point, called the Clovis point, to kill Ice Age animals like mammoths, which were larger than modern elephants and had curved tusks fourteen feet long. After the mammoths disappeared, hunters used a smaller point, called the Folsom point, to kill prehistoric bison. Folsom points are believed to be between eight and nine thousand years old. More recent points are, in general, harder to date and classify. The ones in the rancher's glove compartment come from a three-thousand-year-long pre-Christian period called the Early Plains Archaic.

On a dirt road above the valley of Horse Creek, also in Wyoming, another rancher pointed to a federal construction site on the bluff opposite, where archeologists working for the government had just discovered evidence of a prehistoric camp. “They found a couple of round grinding slabs and a metate—a grinding stone. They told me the camp was maybe three thousand years old,” he said. “What I can’t get over is that the grinding slabs and the metate were made of sandstone. I keep thinking about those grains of sand in the food.”



The big game animals disappeared from the plains about six thousand years ago, and archeologists have as yet found little evidence of any game at all there for maybe two thousand years after that. Experts in the subject of paleoclimates believe that during these years—from about 4000 or 4500 B.C. to 2000 B.C.—the Great Plains went through a period of heat and drought that turned the land to near-desert. This period is sometimes called the Altithermal. As the climate gradually became cooler and more moist, human beings again moved in, usually following river valleys. Stone grinding tools are often found at village sites dating from the last years of the Altithermal; in that environment, apparently, people were grinding up and eating just about anything organic they could find.

On the banks of the Sun River, in western Montana, I sat at the center of a wheel made of rocks, with spokes stretching across the prairie. I had read about the wheel in an astronomy column in a local newspaper; many people believe that these prehistoric stone alignments, called medicine wheels, found at a number of sites on the plains, were astronomical timepieces. The day of my visit was the summer solstice, June 21st. I wanted to see if the sun would set exactly at the end of one of the spokes. The wheel once was whole, but the river eats away more of the bank every year, and now less than half remains. The hooves of cattle going down to the water have trampled out most of the wheel’s center. As I watched, the sun got lower, the blossoms on the little prickly-pear cactus caught the light, the shadows of the grass slid along the ground, the bluffs on the near riverbank turned dusky, the bluffs on the far bank turned pink. Then, beyond the low peaks of the Rocky Mountain front, the sun went down at a point indicated by none of the spokes of the wheel. I had with me a diagram of the wheel when it was less damaged, which showed a small double row of rocks on the approximate line of the sunset. The medicine wheel is on private land, and a trail used by ranch vehicles has scattered those rocks. Astronomers say that many of the medicine wheels on the Great Plains are aligned to the summer solstice. A well-preserved wheel in the Bighorn Mountains, in Wyoming, indicates with spokes ending in rock cairns the points on the horizon where the sun rises and sets at the solstice; other of its cairns may be intended to show where the stars Aldebaran, Rigel, and Sirius appear at dawn in the summer sky. For most tribes of Plains Indians, the summer solstice was the time of the Sun Dance, their most important religious ritual. In the years since white men came, none of the Indians have been much help in explaining who built the medicine wheels, or why.

In the valley of the Madison River, also in western Montana, I stopped at the Madison Buffalo Jump State Monument. A display in a kiosk near the parking lot indicated a nearby bluff off which Indians used to chase buffalo in the days before the horse. I climbed to the top of the bluff and walked away from it across the rolling prairie; when I looked back, I could find no hint that the land beneath my feet was about to end abruptly. It looked like just another rise. It would have fooled me, let alone a buffalo. The bluff is the end of a narrowing tongue of land that would have funnelled the herd to a point. The drop from the bluff—sixty or seventy feet—then turned the animals into a rain of meat. On the spot where so many buffalo landed and died almost no grass grows, maybe out of tact. Indian hunters used this perfect natural trap over and over for thousands of years before the horse put it out of business. From the interstate highway that runs nearby, this bluff looks no different from thousands of others.

At Fort Griffin State Historical Park, in north-central Texas, I walked the edges of a plowed field where much of the town of Fort Griffin Flat once stood. In the eighteen-seventies, the

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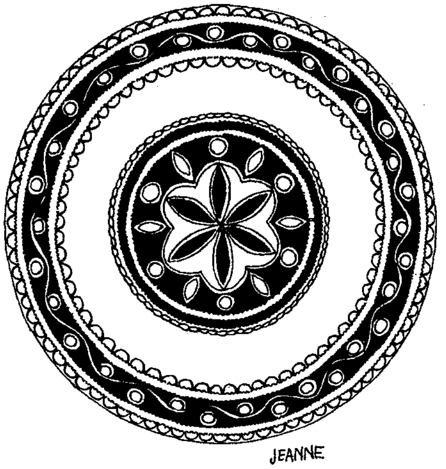
equation that turned buffalo hides into buffing rags brought a lot of money here. Today, only the ruin of a Masonic lodge remains. Among the many people who came here to profit from the buffalo hunters' earnings was the famous gambler Dr. John Henry Holliday, known as Doc. Doc Holliday had been to dental school in Baltimore, and he had good hands. He also had tuberculosis. He was one of a long list of people who came to the dry plains for their health. After a career that involved him in countless knife- and gunfights, including the shootout at the O.K. Corral, the most famous Western gunfight of all, he finally died of his disease in a bed in a hotel in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. His last words were, "This is funny."

Here at Fort Griffin Flat, according to the later recollections of his friend Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday reprimanded a man during a card game for looking through the discard pile. The man, Ed Bailey, pulled a gun, and Doc Holliday killed him with a knife he carried in his breast pocket. Doc Holliday was jailed, and when some of Bailey's friends decided to lynch him a woman named Big Nose Kate set the livery stable on fire, sprung Doc Holliday in the confusion, and rode with him six hundred miles north to Dodge City. No grave in the old cemetery near the townsite has a headstone with the name of Ed Bailey. In fact, none of the graves have any marker at all, and the graveyard itself is unmarked and untended. In this part of Texas, the ground is mostly limestone rock, so a lot of graves in this cemetery were the classic heap-of-stones type familiar from Western movies. With the years, the centers of such graves sag back to the ground.

Just outside the town of Holcomb, in western Kansas, I pulled into the driveway of the house where the Herb Clutter family was murdered one night in 1959, and where, later, the writer Truman Capote came to research his book "In Cold Blood." Wind-bent trees line both sides of the driveway and cross their branches above. I drove past a "KEEP OUT" sign; since the murders, the house has been mostly untenanted. The murderers parked in the shadows of a tree. The ambulances drove across the lawn to the front door. The history of this house makes everything here look different; it makes warm afternoon sunshine into the flash of a police photographer's camera. The shots that stopped four lives in this house also seem to have stopped time. From my car I could see that the lawn had been recently mowed, that the beige frame-and-brick exterior did not need new paint, that a bruise-colored curtain was drawn in a downstairs window. A detail that transported the whole scene back to 1959 was the elaborate television antenna on the roof; anybody as interested in television today would have a satellite dish.

On the open prairie in west-central Montana, near no town, I came across perhaps my favorite ruin on the Great Plains. This ruin is an unfinished structure, about twenty feet high, that covers more than an acre. The outside of the structure angles inward, like the base of a pyramid; the walls are nine feet thick, mostly sheathed in bulldozer-yellow steel plate. On the concrete floor inside are tire tracks, and skid marks where kids have done wheelies or doughnuts. Swallows fly around inside and chirp. The ping of dripping water echoes. Pages of a water-stained Bible rustle in the wind. Through the main entry you could drive a small house. On the exterior someone has written in spray paint, "172 Million Dollar Monument to America's Stupidity."

From a local person (it took about an hour of driving to find one) I learned that this structure was originally intended to be a command center for the Safeguard Anti-Ballistic Missile system. Later, from a public-information officer at Malmstrom Air Force Base, in Great Falls, Montana, I learned that the Army had been in charge of Safeguard, and that construction of the center was suspended in 1974, when the United States got rid of parts of the ABM system in compliance with the SALT I treaty. The command center was built to withstand nuclear attack; now tearing it down would be too expensive to be worthwhile. Even damaging it at all seriously would require patience, cutting torches, and heavy equipment. Usually, ruins refer to the past, but what I like about this one is that it probably will still be here a thousand years from now. Inadvertently, it has become timeless, like the Pyramids or the Great Wall. If the Army were using it for its original purpose, barbed wire and security forces would keep me far away; abandoned, viewed from up close, this monument of Cold War architecture has begun to look a little like a frame from an old James Bond movie. Paleontologists sometimes infer from a fragment of mandible whole skulls, species, cultures. Maybe in thousands of years this ruin will be evidence from which people infer nuclear weapons, the internal-combustion engine, automated banking, Phil Collins albums, and diet pancake syrup. As my van rocks gently on its springs in the wind, and as the wind whistles through the grama grass, I feel as if the car and the grass and I are all flesh to this ruin's bone.



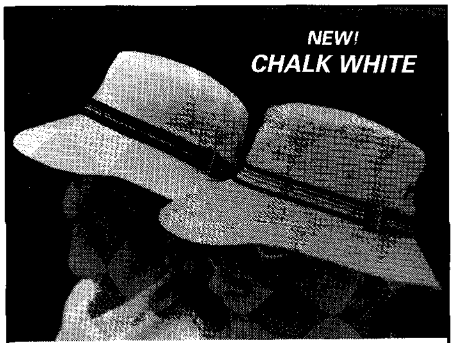
IN or near the towns of Colstrip, Montana, Rock Springs, Wyoming, Zap, North Dakota, Stanton, North Dakota, and Beulah, North Dakota, there is a different kind of ruin. At those places, and many others on the Great Plains, enormous power shovels strip away the land to dig out coal. From a distance, their posture on a ridge is that of a crow on carrion. Near Zap, you can see two or three of them on the horizon at one time, their booms swinging back and forth like feelers. At Colstrip, Rock Springs, Stanton, and other places, on-site power plants, also called mine-mouth plants, turn the coal into electricity. In Stanton, the strip mine and the power plant are within sight of a Mandan village that was emptied by the smallpox epidemic of 1837. That ninety-five-acre site is now a National Historic Site, with posted signs saying "Digging Prohibited by Law." Railroad tracks lead away from all the strip mines. From the mine-mouth plants tall two- and four-armed pylons file across the prairie east and west, to places where more people live.

Obviously, I don't like strip mines. The only not horrible aspect of strip mining I can think of is that the machines it requires are a real spectacle. Especially if you come upon one at night, all lit up, eating away under banks of lights miles from anywhere. Basically, a strip-mining machine is a steam shovel, exponentially enlarged. The cab section can be the size of a multi-story apartment block, with windows, ladders, catwalks, lunchrooms, and (for all I know) bowling alleys. The bucket has teeth the size of a man, and room to park three stretch limos. The biggest of these machines can strip an area of several city blocks without moving. In their wake, they leave not ruins but ruin. The coal companies sometimes attempt "reclamation" by planting grass or trees in the ruin and calling it a recreation area or a game preserve. Land that has been strip-mined, "reclaimed" or not, demonstrates that the rest of the Great Plains is a palimpsest: unstripped ground looks the way geology, wind, water, buffalo, cattle, the railroads have made it look. Like other arid but inhabited parts of the world, the plains sometimes hold pieces of the past intact and out of time, so that a romantic or curious person can walk into an abandoned house and get a whiff of June, 1933, or can look at a sagebrush ridge and imagine dinosaurs wading through a marsh. In the presence of strip-mined land, these humble flights fall to the ground. Scrambled in the waste heaps, the dinosaur vertebrae drift in chaos with the sandstone metate, the .45-70 rifle cartridge, the plastic-foam cup. It is impossible to imagine a Cheyenne war party coming out of the canyon, because the canyon is gone.

Among the many booms that have occurred on the Great Plains have been several booms in archeology. One began in the late nineteen-forties, when the Army Corps of Engineers was getting ready to dam the Missouri River and submerge forever hundreds of miles of riverbed and thousands of square miles of bank and valley. Teams of archeologists working for the government went along the river examining sites and recording data. Another boom followed the Arab oil embargo of 1973-74, when energy companies were considering mining more coal and building much bigger mine-mouth plants to burn it. By law, anyone who plans to dig up public land must first hire an archeologist to report on the land's historical significance. Archeologists who do that kind of work are called contract archeologists. In a booklet called "Early Peoples of North Dakota," written for schoolchildren, C. L. Dill, an archeologist with the State Historical Society of North Dakota, explains, "If a site is dug up before it is investigated, the information in the site will be lost forever, just like tearing a page from a book. Archaeologists excavate sites carefully and record everything they see and find. That's like reading the page before it is thrown away."

Strip-mined land is land thrown away. Usually, trash exists in a larger landscape; after strip mining, the larger landscape *is* trash. Instead of adding a new layer to the palimpsest of the Great Plains, strip mining destroys the palimpsest itself. Of a place where the imagination could move at will backward and even forward through time, strip mining creates a kind of time prison. Even after "reclamation," land that has been stripped gives you no year to think about but the year when the stripping happened.

I fear for the Great Plains because many people think they are boring. Money and power in this country concentrate elsewhere. The view of the Great Plains from an airplane window is hardly more detailed than the view from a car on the interstate highways, which seem designed to get you across them in the least time possible, as if this were an awkward point in a conversation. In the minds of many, natural beauty means something that looks like Switzerland. The ecology movement often works best in behalf of winsome landscapes and wildlife. The Great Plains do not ingratiate. They seldom photograph well—or, rather, they are seldom photographed. Images of the plains are not a popular feature of postcards or scenic calendars. And, in truth, parts of the plains are a little on the monotonous side. Persuading someone not to destroy a place that to him seems as unvaried as a TV test pattern is a challenge. The beauty of the plains is not just in themselves but in the sky, in what you think when you look at them, and in what they are not. A strip-mining machine could eat the Madison Buffalo Jump—a one-in-a-million piece of ground that fooled buffalo for thousands of years—for



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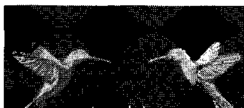

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breakfast. By leaving nothing behind but a landscape of trash, strip mining insults the future. By destroying the physical record, and by making the history of white people on the Great Plains look like nothing more than the progress of appetite, strip mining also insults the past. Land that has been strip-mined reduces the whole story of the Great Plains to: Chewed up, spit out. —IAN FRAZIER

(*This is the first part of a three-part article*)

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DEPARTMENT OF DELICACY AND CARING
(REJECTION SLIP DIVISION)

[*Communication received by a writer from a literary journal*]

THE QUARTERLY
Gordon Lish

Please know that my turning this work back to you is meant to suggest nothing more than my not being able to make a place for it in the particular number of The Quarterly whose pages I am now filling. Please also know that you have my most earnest thanks for the good thought of your interest in The Quarterly. I hope you will be persuaded to trust certain assurances—namely, that I am abundantly glad to have your notice, that The Quarterly would be pointless without your continuing favor, that I am never anything less than cheered by the prospect of the day's mail and the new reading it will put before me, that I give every attention to every piece of writing The Quarterly has the good luck to have sent along to it, that your work came directly into my hands and was considered only by me, that I make every effort to open my heart and my mind every time I open an envelope, that I do not look at cover letters and the like and am concerned to discover what I think and feel solely in relation to the text, that The Quarterly is currently in receipt of somewhere between one hundred and two hundred manuscripts a day, that in no instance does the provenance of a manuscript have the remotest bearing on its fortunes, that The Quarterly never tires of seeing work from anyone, that The Quarterly welcomes the opportunity to see work of every stripe, that The Quarterly understands it will thrive only by seeing work it has not seen and whose character it could not even guess at, that The Quarterly can be counted on to hold itself in a state of readiness to be instructed, widened, surprised, refreshed. One last remark: Apart from those intervals when I must be away from my desk for either a holiday or a lecture somewhere distant, The Quarterly will always do all it can to honor its promise to post a response to a manuscript no later than one week subsequent to receipt. Again, you have my thanks for the great gesture of your offer—I know it cost you money and bother, and I am of course not at all unalert to the harsh cost levied against the wealth of the writer's spirit whenever the outcome goes contrary to wishes. I so wish it might have this time been otherwise.

THE THEATRE

Heart of Texas

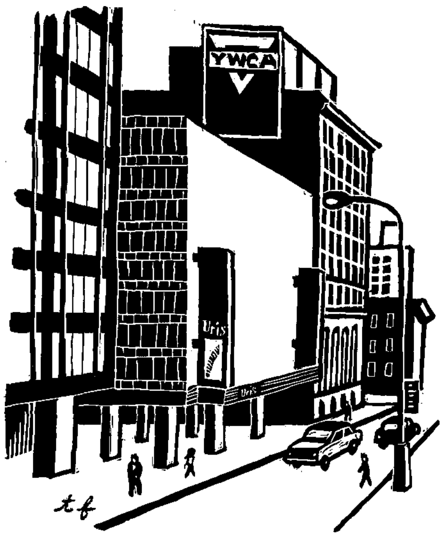
STANLEY, a small town in western Texas, is the setting and, in a sense, the subject of Larry L. King's good play "The Night Hank Williams Died," at the WPA. The action takes place there in the summer of 1952, in a saloon and poolroom owned by a wise, generous fellow called Gus Gilbert, who dispenses beer by the bottle, occasionally for free. The story Mr. King tells is of a youngish man, Thurmond Stottle, who pumps gas for a meagre living, and who writes songs and dreams of leaving his stifling home town and going to Nashville. His girl, Nellie Bess, has already escaped, into marriage with a chiropractor in California, and she has come home for a brief visit for the first time since her marriage. The love of Thurmond and Nellie Bess, we soon learn, has just been put on hold, for all the good it does them. The first act of the play is a touching comedy, the second grows bleak, and the whole, as you can see, is constructed as a country-and-Western ballad. The songs, which are integral to the action, were also written by Mr. King and they sound just right. He, you will remember, co-wrote "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," a great, and deserved, success, some years ago. The plot of "The Night Hank Williams Died" is strong, and there is no lack of incident or characters, but it is the rich Texas vernacular—the rat-tat-tat of startling, bawdy similes and the funny throwaway lines—that gives the show its texture. Seldom can the ear of the audience have been more pampered. An endearing patron of the bar, one Moon Childers, sounds much like Lyndon Johnson, and what could be better? Among the others who keep the action on the boil, providing a lot of fun before its sad conclusion, are a villainous sheriff, Royce Landon, Jr., and the pesky mother of Nellie Bess, one Mrs. Vida Powers, who is a religious nut. Hank Williams, by the way, does not appear; he is a faraway presence embodying all of Thurmond's yearnings.

The WPA, way over west on Twenty-third Street (one foot on Manhattan Island, the other in the Hudson River), does very well by Mr. King. The production, under Christopher Ashley's direction, is always satisfying, always in keeping. Edward T. Gianfrancesco has, as usual, by some trick of trompe l'oeil, designed a spacious setting on the minute stage; appropriate lighting by Craig Evans, appropriate costumes by Jess Goldstein. The acting is in every instance competent, sometimes better than that. I especially admired Matt Mulhern as the thwarted songwriter; Betsy Aidem as his love (thwarted, too, come to think of it); Barton Heyman, presiding over his saloon and the action; and J. R. Horne as amiable Moon.

—EDITH OLIVER

Mixed Bag

"DALTON'S BACK," at the Circle Repertory Company, is a play that relies on the gimmick of presenting its hero as a child and as an adult simultaneously. Its hero is a young man (John Dossett) who is confused about life and love because his mother (Lisa Emery) gave him mixed signals when he was a child. Sometimes she'd comfort him when he had bad dreams; sometimes she'd slap him for it. Sometimes she'd have tantrums over silly things like lima beans. She'd throw the beans on the floor and shout, call him names, say all manner of harsh, unmotherly things, and just generally make him feel worthless. About the only thing Dalton's mother consistently did that was nice was to tickle his back; consequently, back-tickling is the only human relation Dalton can happily engage in. As an adolescent, Dalton gets his best friend (Jayce Bartok) to tickle his back (until the friend wises up and skedaddles), and as an adult he gets his girlfriend (Colleen Davenport) to perform the same service. She's a swell gal: fun-loving, spirited, warm, understanding, and highly sexed. Every word out of her mouth is an adventure, and she's endlessly willing to delve with Dalton into his abused past. But Dalton can't take so much happiness. He becomes increasingly moody, violent, and hard to live with (hard to sleep with, too: he's forever spouting baby talk in his dreams), and eventually throws his girlfriend out of the house. Finally, in what is probably meant to be an astonishing coup de théâtre, Dalton confronts and embraces his childhood self (Matt McGrath). We leave him tickling his own back—which, I have to say, is what I think the playwright, Keith Curran, is doing.



ALSO being produced by the Circle Rep, at the Cherry Lane Theatre, is "Brilliant Traces," a two-character play, by Cindy Lou Johnson, that uses comic surrealism to call comic surrealism itself into question and say something about reality. In it, a young woman (Joan Cusack) dressed in an antique wedding dress bursts into a desolate cabin in the wilds of Alaska and throws herself on the mercy of its startled occupant. She appears to be in a state of acute distress and, while the occupant (Kevin Anderson) cowers in a blanket, talks wildly—between sips from a bottle of Jim Beam that sits open on the table—of being lost and of having driven for days without sleep or proper nourishment. Eventually, exhausted by her ordeal (whatever it has been), she falls asleep, practically in midsentence. When she does, the occupant of the cabin, who turns out to be a reasonably attractive and able-bodied young man, carries her to the bed, undresses her, gives her a sponge bath, and covers her with a blanket, at which point the play proper—to which all this has been a sort of prelude—begins.

"Brilliant Traces" is one of those plays in which a man and a woman battle it out in a small enclosed space, alternately repulsing and seducing each other. It's a genre there has been no shortage of recently: only last season, two of our foremost playwrights,

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Lanford Wilson and Terrence McNally, used almost identical dramatic conceits to explore the problem of how hard it is to love and be loved. "Burn This" and "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" both made me slightly nervous: they suggested that men think that what a woman wants is to have a guy plop himself down in her apartment and refuse to leave. So I was quite happy to see Joan Cusack burst onto the Cherry Lane stage—obviously in bridal garb and obviously in flight. It seemed to promise an alternative perspective.

Strangely, the first play the Circle Rep produced this season, Craig Lucas's "Reckless," also began with a woman wandering through a snow-driven night and throwing herself on the mercy of a strange man. She was not fleeing from a bridegroom: her husband had taken a contract out on her life. But the device of using an outlandish event to set the action of the play in motion is the same, and so is the conceit. "Reckless" was actually an amalgam of two varieties of work the Circle Rep has taken to producing of late: plays that use quirky, far-out images in an attempt to offer a new perspective on ordinary, everyday occurrences, and plays that raise ordinary, everyday occurrences to the level of melodrama without saying much about anything at all. "Reckless" used quirky, far-out images to no purpose whatever. In so doing, it managed to suggest, intentionally or not, that the elements of real life are somehow beneath our notice—that they have to be disguised and tricked out in surreal imagery in order to merit our attention.

Offhand, I can think of no effect this style of dramaturgy might have other than to induce complacency in its audience. "Reckless" is a play written to make people feel hip. "Brilliant Traces" is another matter entirely. Neither of its characters is meant to be taken at face value: both are literary constructs, embodying a spirit of melodrama which the playwright wants us to reject. The kinds of people they represent actually exist: the angst-ridden woman who protests that she is afraid of being obliterated by marriage and all the while seduces you with her helplessness, and the guy who is so appalled by the effect you have on him that he cooks your shoes. But Cindy Lou Johnson has outfitted them in the accessories of romantic cliché: the woman is called Rosannah DeLuce, the man Henry Harry; she wears satin slippers, he works on an oil rig when he isn't living as a recluse. At the same time, the dialogue between them has been constructed in such an intricate way that all the subjects they touch on have some bearing on ideas about reality and perception. "Brilliant Traces" isn't really about whether Rosannah and Henry will wind up in an embrace (we know they will) or about what drove Rosannah from the altar (we find that we know this, too). Miss Johnson's subject is the level of self-dramatization on which such plays, the characters who inhabit them, and the audiences who attend them all function.

"Brilliant Traces" was directed by Terry Kinney, a founding member of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre. It represents Miss Johnson's first major New York production, and the Circle Rep has done her proud, providing a design team that includes John Lee Beatty (set), Dennis Parichy (lights), and Laura Crow (costumes). Mr. Kinney has directed the play with a restraint that, frankly, surprised me. I've always associated him with the kind of melodramatic chic that Steppenwolf seems to traffic in. (Think of Mr. Kinney hitting himself in "Orphans" and John Malkovich lurching violently about the stage in "Burn This.") Not only has he kept the wall-banging and chair-throwing to a minimum but he has wisely directed against the grain of surrealism, aiming for lightness and laughter rather than portentousness, thereby eliciting from Mr. Anderson one of the most moving and eloquent comic performances of the season. Especially effective in Mr. Anderson's acting here is the gap he achieves between the content of what he is saying and the affect of his delivery. (Often, in the past, his tendency has been to underscore a particular line with a tone that says the same thing.) As for Miss Cusack, who was one of the best things in the Lincoln Center production of "Road" last summer, and who has since embarked on a brilliant career of playing lower-middle-class vulgarians in such movies as "Working Girl" and "Married to the Mob," it's a pleasure to see her wind up dressed like a normal person (in sweats and a big flannel shirt) and— Well, she's just a pro. —MIMI KRAMER

JAZZ

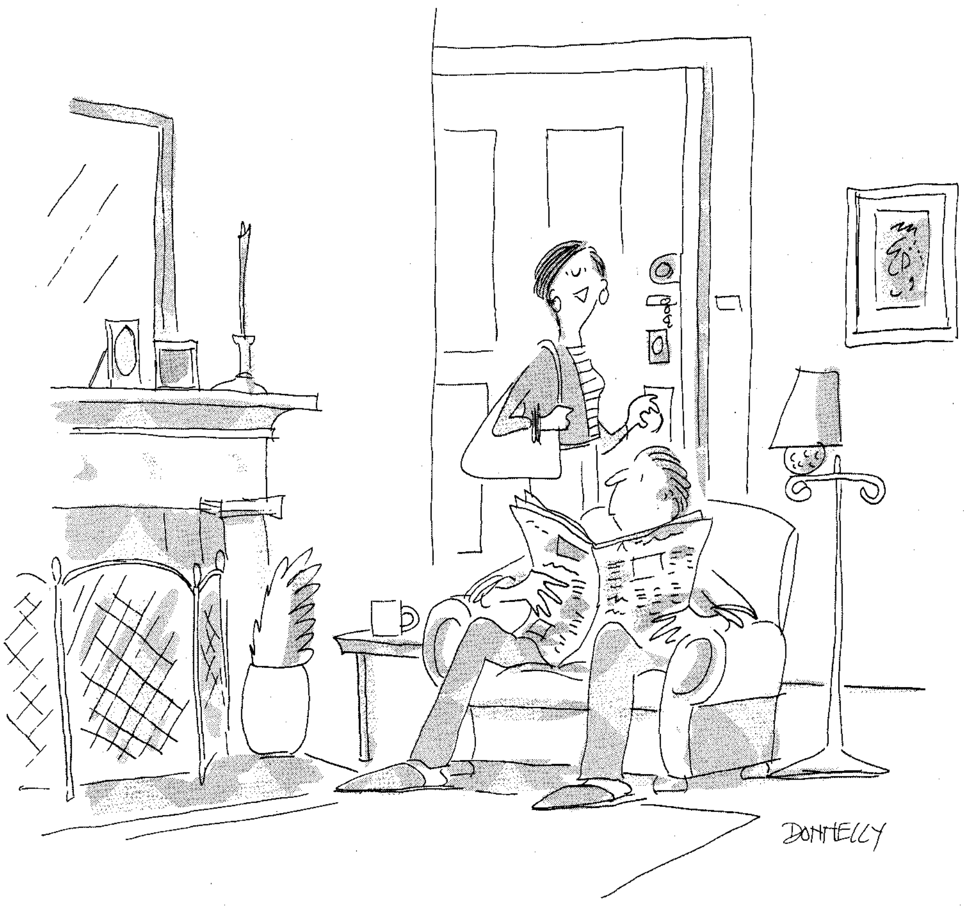
Past, Present, and Future

JAZZ, which has been running at top speed for most of its ninety years, has begun to slow down. It could even be argued that it has been put on pause. Very little that isn't imitative has come along since the early seventies. (The World Saxophone Quartet and the Art Ensemble of Chicago are exceptions.) Many young musicians model themselves on the grand masters of the past, and certain contemporary groups are full of eclectic echoes, delivered with such murkiness that it is difficult to tell whether their music is reverential or parodic. To a parlous degree, jazz has begun to feed on itself. The record stores are full of reissues—all of Charlie Parker's recordings on Verve, and Dial, and Savoy, all of Monk's on Riverside, the entire huge Commodore catalogue (still in progress), all the early Blue Notes, the entire Keynote catalogue, everything of Benny Goodman's on Victor, and on and on. And there are endless re-creations of older jazz on recordings and in the flesh. Replicas have been offered during the past fifteen years of the bands of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Jimmie Lunceford, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Benny Carter, Paul Whiteman, Gene Goldkette, and Erskine Hawkins, and of the Savoy Sultans, the Miles Davis nonet, the Swingle Singers, the Quintet of the Hot Club of France, the Alec Wilder octet, the Thelonious Monk quartet, Sidney Bechet's New Orleans Feetwarmers, and the Tadd Dameron band. Even Paul Whiteman's famous 1924 Aeolian Hall concert was re-created in toto at Town Hall and taken on the road. And this is to say nothing of the countless worldwide (usually amateur) imitations of Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, Bix Beiderbecke, and Jelly Roll Morton. Morton has also been brought back in a novel—an ingenious one, by Samuel Charters—that is set in the form of a Morton monologue and called "Jelly Roll Morton's Last Night at the Jungle Inn."

Two more re-creations appeared in New York in January—the Mingus Dynasty, at the Village Vanguard, and John Colianni's rendering of the John Kirby sextet, at Michael's Pub. The Mingus Dynasty was formed not long after Charles Mingus's death, ten years ago, by his widow, Sue Mingus. It was designed to keep Mingus's compositions and methods alive, and it has succeeded as much as any musical autocracy can succeed without its leader. Generally made up of Mingus alumni, the group has come in several sizes, and at the Vanguard it included Jimmy Knepper (the new leader, on trombone), Jack Walrath (trumpet), John Handy (alto saxophone), George Adams (tenor saxophone), John Hicks (piano), Ray Drummond (bass), and Victor Lewis (drums). The horns were alumni, the rhythm section was not. (Mingus's sharp drummer, Dannie Richmond, died a year ago. He was in many ways a Mingus creation, and will be difficult to replace. He played drums the way Mingus would have if he had been a drummer—with force, clarity, abandon, a certain homemadeness, and great swing.)

Mingus's music was a direct extension of his difficult, idiosyncratic self. His pieces took whatever form pleased him. His melodies were long and sinuous and quite beautiful; they were slow-motion exhalations. He brought back old devices (for instance, a kind of New Orleans polyphony) and invented new ones (two soloists "talking" in an almost connubial counterpoint). He shook up jazz rhythms, using ad lib, accelerando, decelerando, double time, half time, triple time, stop time. He wrote one-melody compositions and multi-theme pieces somewhat like ragtime in form. He wrote satirical music without being cute or raucous, and he wrote love songs without being sentimental. Then Mingus the performer-magician strode into the midst of all this and bound it together with his shouts, his singing, his pounding ensemble playing, and his monumental solos.

The Dynasty did four numbers during an early set in midweek. Two were familiar ("Fables of Faubus," "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat"); one was rare ("The Shoes of the Fisherman's Wife and Other Jive Slippers," also sometimes titled "Once Upon a Time There Was a Holding Corporation



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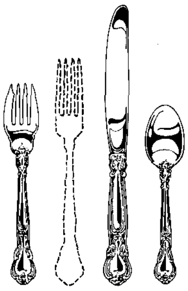

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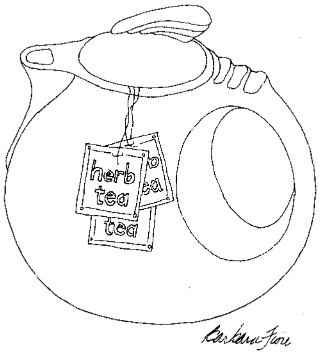
Called Old America"); and one was a fairly recent addition to his œuvre called "Sketch No. 3." It was based on a melody that Mingus sang into a tape recorder during the last, wheelchair-bound year of his life. All four numbers were classic Mingus—long-limbed melodies, jarring rhythmic changes, revolving harmonic colors, and the constant Mingus tension between peace and war. The soloists were comfortable with the material and occasionally exciting (Knepper, with his way of shaping phrases never heard before, and Handy, a sweet-toned, gentle Charlie Parker follower), and the ensembles were well played. But missing was the steady feeling of imminence that Mingus's groups had when he was at the helm, the feeling that he was about to stir up a hot and crazy closing ensemble, or play a godly, magisterial bass solo, or stop the music and fire his pianist.

John Colianni's attempt to revive the John Kirby sextet was well meant. The original Kirby band, which flourished between 1937 and the early forties, was inimitable. It was young and upstart, and it skimmed its music. It cast its arrangements (of everything from "Sweet Georgia Brown" to jazzed-up Bach) in sleek unison ensembles broken by in-and-out solos, often supported by organ chords. Its fast numbers hummed and jumped and swung, and its slow numbers dreamed. It was the smoothest jazz band anyone had ever heard. It was witty, and before it began to take itself too seriously it tried to shake the solemnity out of jazz. Three players gave the band its quicksilver quality: Charlie Shavers, who wrote many of the arrangements and was the flashiest trumpeter of his time (he occupied the space between Roy Eldridge and Dizzy Gillespie, and shamed them both with his technique); Billy Kyle, an Earl Hines–Teddy Wilson descendant, who had a sparking touch, and whose runs and single-note lines moved like evening swallows (he had considerable influence on the young Bud Powell); and O'Neill Spencer, a feathery, lifting brush drummer whose snare-drum patterns leaned into the wind. These three towed the rest of the band, which consisted of John Kirby on bass, Buster Bailey on clarinet, and Russell Procope on alto saxophone. Whenever Bailey or Procope soloed, everything sagged infinitesimally. (Procope spent twenty-eight years of his life as a mostly non-soloing member of the Ellington band.) The only non-sagging members of Colianni's group were Colianni himself (he is a fleet, many-sided pianist) and his bassist, Bob Field. The ensembles were handled with considerable aplomb, though, and the group's version of "Sweet Georgia Brown" came close to the zoom the Kirby band achieved at its up-tempo best.



THE pianists Barry Harris and Tommy Flanagan tend to get lumped together. They are just three months apart in age (Harris, who recently turned fifty-nine, is older), they hail from Detroit, and they came up in the last years of bebop. But there are few other similarities. Harris was formed by Bud Powell and Charlie Parker. Flanagan worked his way through Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, Hank Jones, Parker, and Powell. Harris's style is flyaway: his melodic lines seem to turn down at their ends and are made up of short, abrupt phrases that stop and are gone. Flanagan's style comes directly at you: his melodic lines turn up at their ends and are long and speaking. Harris is a pale, almost transparent player, while Flanagan's playing glows with reds and browns and greens. Harris plays the piano as if it were a saxophone; he is more interested in getting his melodic lines out than he is in dynamics and shading. Flanagan's dynamics undulate constantly and gracefully, and every phrase contrasts with what has come before; he sings in the voices of his instrument. Harris, who has long been a teacher, is a didactic pianist. Flanagan is always surprising himself.

These ruminations were tested when Harris and Flanagan appeared in successive weeks in January at the Fortune Garden Pavilion. Harris has a reputation as an interpreter of Thelonious Monk, but on his opening night he played almost nothing but standards—"Body and Soul," "Prelude to a Kiss," "What Is This Thing Called Love?," "Sweet and Lovely," "Don't Blame Me." He played against severe odds. He was accompanied by a bass player who didn't seem to be there—who played with his back to Harris, and kept slowing down the tempo, which at first must have made Harris feel as if he were swimming with his shoes on. Perhaps the intricacies of Monk were out of the question. Harris's smile got brighter and brighter—the way Mary Lou Williams' used to when she was annoyed—and, as it did, his playing got better and better. He delivered some beauties—a soft, racing swirl of notes in the fast "What Is This Thing Called Love?," a stuttering Bud Powell line in "Don't Blame Me," and some dramatic double-time figures in his third chorus of "Body and Soul."

Flanagan was blessed with the brilliant George Mraz on bass, and he was in exceptional form. He moved the beat around, flicked off ascending runs that ended in little upper-register explosions, inserted quick secret runs that seemed to move beneath his longer runs, and added, as icing, racing double-time figures, sotto-voce murmurs, and big, thinking chords. Flanagan knows hundreds of tunes, but he likes to cook the same things for a month or two before moving on. His current favorites were on view at the Fortune Garden: Matt Dennis's "That Tired Routine Called Love," Tom McIntosh's "With Malice Toward None," Jerome Kern's "I'm Old Fashioned," Juan Tizol's "Caravan," and a Billy Strayhorn medley. Flanagan quit accompanying singers ten years ago (he was an accompanist for much of the sixties and seventies), and he has reached the point as a soloist where his subtlety, drive, emotion, harmonic depth, and layered improvising match any jazz pianist's.

HARRIS and Flanagan also found themselves side by side last fall, as judges (along with Roland Hanna and Roger Kellaway) for the ten-thousand-dollar Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition. (Monk would have laughed at such highfalutin sport, but jazz pianists have been highly competitive since the days

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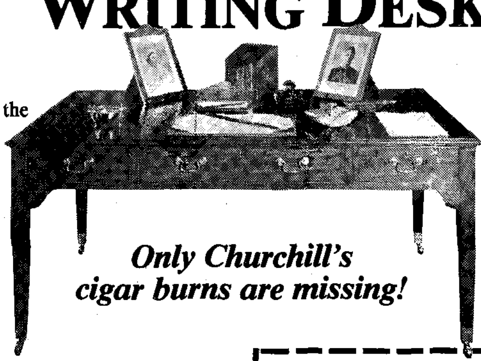

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of James P. Johnson and Luckey Roberts.) There were about four hundred contestants, and the winner was Ted Rosenthal, a twenty-nine-year-old graduate of the Manhattan School of Music. He has dazzling chops, and he brought them to Zinno early in February. All his chords have fifteen notes, his Art Tatum runs smoke, his Monk dissonances shriek, and his double-time passages are faster than light. But he has so much technical equipment aboard that his bow rides out of water. He started almost every tune with tangled, bewildering Erroll Garner mix-'em-up introductions (Garner's introductions were extraordinary surrealistic preludes), and he converted "On Green Dolphin Street" into a soggy miniature "Warsaw Concerto." He played a sparkling medium-tempo blues that had all the right notes and little of the right feeling. He played "Where Has the Time Gone" so slowly it sounded like Chopin's "Funeral March." Sometimes eclectic trappings disguise a lack of originality; Rosenthal's are excess baggage.

SOME stirring things happened during Shelley Shier and Hank O'Neal's Sixth Annual Floating Jazz Festival, held last fall aboard the S. S. Norway and the M. S. Seaward. Gus Johnson, the noble Basie drummer, showed again and again that the example of Sid Catlett still shines bright. Norman Simmons, long an accompanist for singers, was given the space for three stunning single-note solos at the end of a Joe Williams performance. At a solo afternoon concert, the pianist Roger Kellaway, who makes a virtue of virtuosity, took seven numbers apart (among them such worn-smooth songs as "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Skylark," and "New Orleans") and rebuilt them as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The guitarist Howard Alden and the bassist Michael Moore also gave an afternoon concert, in which they skated delicately over each other's surfaces, and in which Moore played sumptuous arco solos on "You've Changed" and "Embraceable You." Tommy Flanagan, lacking the rhythmic accompaniment he feels is essential to his work, gave half a dozen solo recitals only slightly below his usual level. Benny Carter and Clark Terry, backed by John Bunch (piano), Alden, Moore, and Ed Shaughnessy (drums), did ten lilting numbers. And the tenor saxophonist Arnett Cobb appeared briefly two or three times, offering his houselike Southwest tone and his predilection for odd "modern" notes, and easily put every other tenor saxophonist aboard in perspective.

But best of all were a concert given by the gospel singer Marion Williams and a brief, startling appearance by the singer Juanita Brooks. Miss Williams was accompanied by her pianist, Johnny Thompson, and by Alden, the bassist Major Holley, and the drummer Chuck Riggs. She sang nine songs, and, as Leadbelly liked to say, rocked church. She gave us her falsettos, shouts, two-octave intervals, growls, blue notes, and pure stomping fervor. And she talked—her talk singing slowed to a walk—about her life and about God, surely sitting at her left hand. Then, three nights later, Juanita Brooks, who is in her thirties and began as a gospel singer in New Orleans, sat in with the tenor saxophonist Buddy Tate, the pianist Ray Bryant, the bassist Milt Hinton, and Gus Johnson. She is tall and beautiful, and moves with a room-filling energy and grace. She has a strong contralto, a Mahalia Jackson voice, and she began her five numbers with a surging "Sunny Side of the Street." She did everything a great jazz singer is supposed to do—played hob with the beat, made up new melodies, used silence, put her accents in the right unexpected places, and swung irresistibly. And she didn't sound like anyone. (Shelley Shier first spotted Juanita Brooks a couple of years ago in the Off Broadway musical "Staggerlee," and she says that Juanita Brooks has had little training and knows almost nothing of singing outside the gospel world.) None of her other numbers quite matched "Sunny Side of the Street," but it didn't matter. She had already done what Billie Holiday did at the outset of her career with "What a Little Moonlight Can Do" and "Miss Brown to You." —WHITNEY BALLIETT

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

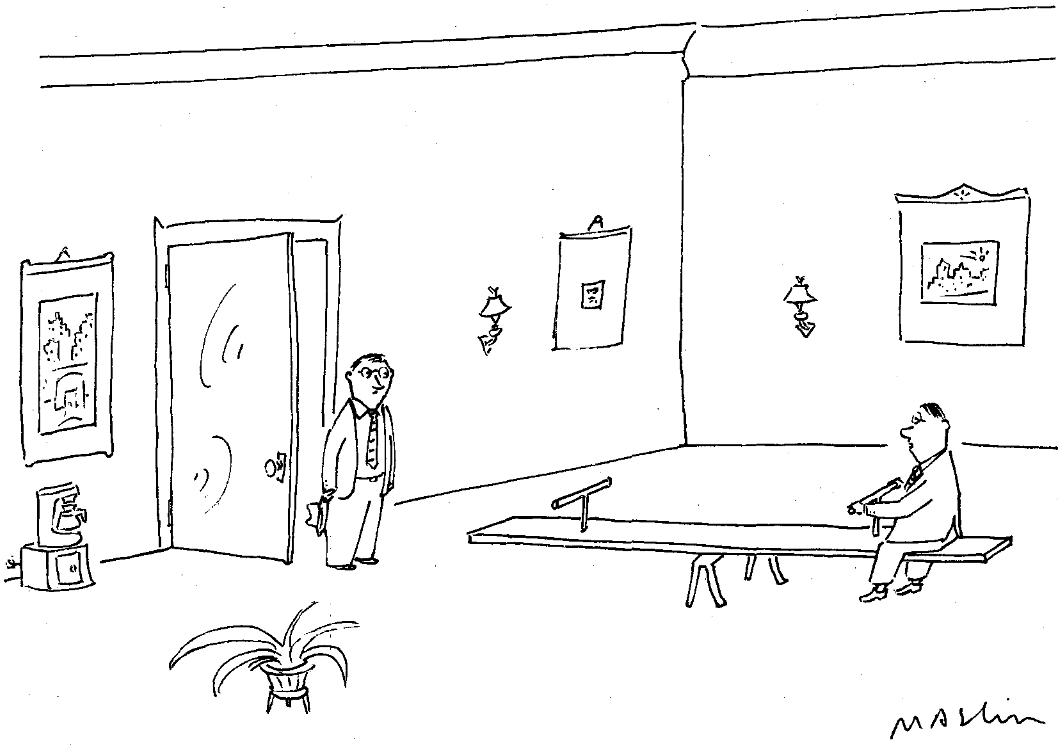
Marriages

A FAST, tense thriller like "True Believer" can quicken your senses. It can jazz you up and make you feel a little manic. The director, Joseph Ruben, has great timing, and the story has some elation built right into its structure. It's about a Manhattan lawyer with a rancid practice: he's been defending drug dealers and getting paid in cash. His new associate arrives, fresh from law school, and looks at him with disgust. The lawyer is goaded into taking on a case that's outside his drug specialty, and soon his eyes widen at the possibility—just the bare possibility—that the man he's defending might be innocent. Ruben, who directed the 1984 political-suspense fantasy "Dreamscape" and the 1987 suburban shocker "The Stepfather," has a deft ironic tone. He knows not to overdo the theme of a disillusioned idealist's rediscovery of his belief in justice. He just lets it seep through the plot.

In the sixties, the lawyer, Eddie Dodd (James Woods), was a hero of the counterculture; he had the reputation of being a fearless champion of civil rights. That's why the just hatched lawyer, Roger Baron (Robert Downey, Jr.), who was top man on the Michigan *Law Review*, wanted to work with him. Rog made the naïve mistake of thinking that Eddie Dodd was still the white knight he'd idolized; the movie itself is naïve about Eddie's golden age. The script, by Wesley Strick, is sharp and gritty, but it mythologizes its William Kunstler-like figure. Eddie is meant to be a once-authentic hero, the protector of the weak, who has lost his self-respect. As a figure, he comes perilously close to the aging, drunken lawyers of old Hollywood who found their humanity again. (Eddie is a pothead.) But Ruben's moviemaking avoids sogginess: Eddie's tawdry, barbed view of the world whips you along. And, as Woods plays him—angry, insomniac, unclean—Eddie has listening posts on the back of his head. He would hear a whispered mention of his name in Madison Square Garden. Eddie's graying ponytail, fastened with turquoise terry cloth, is the vanity he clings to, the emblem of what he once stood for. It's surprisingly dignified and handsome, like the chignons of the Founding Fathers.

When I tried to tell a friend how sensational James Woods is in "True Believer," the friend said, "Yeah, but no matter how good he is he knows he's better." I can't disagree, exactly, yet it's the impression he gives of hyperbolic self-regard that makes him seem perfectly cast here (as it did in "Salvador"). Almost anyone else I can think of as Eddie Dodd would be too hammy warm; Woods' flamboyance helps to dry out the role. If Eddie weren't written as a heroic radical—if he were conceived as a more realistic version of the blowhards who exploited the protesters of the sixties—Woods could play him more complexly. That would be a different movie, but this one does at least recognize that Dodd has a blowhard tendency. In one scene he gets heady on the excitement of having a bunch of reporters around him, and he brags about what he's going to prove in court; when he sees Rog listening, he's suddenly shamefaced, like a kid who's been caught out.

The case involves a young Korean immigrant, Kim (Yuji Okumoto), who was convicted of shooting a member of a Chinese gang on the street in Chinatown; Kim has been in Sing Sing for eight years, and has just killed a convict who attacked him. Kim's mother thinks that Dodd may be able to get him a new trial, because a witness to the original murder claims that the murderer wasn't Oriental. This witness (played winningly by Tom Bower) has been a patient in a mental hospital, and he's very obstreperous about his knowledge that the phone company killed John F. Kennedy. But Dodd manages to use his testimony to wangle a new trial. Then he's stymied when Kim won't tell him anything. Something, though, must be fishy about Kim's conviction, because the district attorney (Kurtwood Smith) offers Dodd a deal: Kim, who faces forty more years in prison, will be out in five if Dodd agrees not to bring the case to trial. Dodd tells Kim about the D.A.'s offer, and Kim turns it down. That's when Dodd becomes passionately dedicated to Kim's defense; he feels that Kim gave up the offer for him—that Kim knew he was itching to fight



"We'll begin, Mr. Bergeron, just as soon as you're seated."

the authorities. And this case becomes all he cares about. He gets so hyper that he's shouting in people's faces. (One guy, appalled, says, "Jesus, jump back!")

"True Believer" can be said to be about Dodd's finding his lost ideals, but it's basically about pace and drive. The director doesn't use the movie to congratulate himself on sharing Eddie's ideals; he uses it to make us share the excitement of Eddie's recovering those ideals. The picture is about Eddie Dodd's body chemistry—the energy and charge that go into the investigation of what happened eight years earlier. Eddie doesn't want sleep; he lives off the excitement of having a cause. It's a marriage of purpose and adrenaline. He hurtles from one illicit source of data to the next, and Rog and a private investigator named Kitty (Margaret Colin) hurtle alongside him. The picture keeps your brain active processing the information they turn up, and the hardboiled dialogue is always telling you something twisty and unforeseen. The cinematography, by John W. Lindley (who also did "The Stepfather"), has a tabloid harshness. Flashbacks to the eight-year-old crime, which is seen in bluish-tinted black-and-white, are ominous, grungy. And the prison killing is staged with breathtaking assurance. This is true teamwork: the movie pulses.

Joseph Ruben (he's still in his thirties) works in popular forms, but there's nothing formulaic about his characters. Part of the stimulus of "True Believer" is the rush that you get from the minor players who keep being brought into the investigation and the trial. Ruben has a marvellous intuitive grasp of just how long we want to look at a self-righteous ex-convict (Miguel Fernandes) who runs a plumbing-supplies factory with ex-con labor, or at an ex-con (John Snyder) who picks a fight with Eddie. This isn't the kind of movie that builds suspense by working up your dread of what's coming next. Ruben and the editor, George Bowers, get at you viscerally without sacrificing the sophisticated stuff that's going on all the time. They do it by the vitality of their craftsmanship. As Rog, Downey is never too much of a baby-faced hayseed; Rog is hip enough to cover up his gaffes. Margaret Colin gives a fillip to her line readings: she makes comedy out of cynicism. And Ruben trusts us enough not to make Kim a soft-eyed sweetie. It's a pick-me-up of a movie. Nothing great, nothing terribly distinctive, but the aliveness of the texture can keep you fascinated. And the case raises an issue that may be new to movies: how legal trade-offs violate the system of justice. This is one thriller where you almost never feel you're ahead of the story.

MIKE LEIGH's wacked-out comedy-drama "High Hopes" is exuberantly likable without actually being very satisfying. It's a loosely joined series of sketches about class distinctions in Thatcherland, which is populated here by rich twits, pushy yups, and the working poor, who are soulful and full of humor. The representative figures are three couples: a shiny-faced champagne dealer and his cool socialite wife; a boorish, money-making car salesman and his shrieking hysteric of a wife; and a despairing Marxist who scrapes by as a motorcycle messenger and his companion of ten years, who works for the city. Nobody produces anything of value or is creative except waifish Shirley (Ruth Sheen), who lives with the messenger. I hate to say this, but, yes, she likes to grow things. Her job is planting trees, and she keeps a garden in a corner of the roof of her apartment building. And she longs to have a child. Put this way, the movie sounds like a liberal-left horror, but almost all the lachrymose social consciousness is side by side with loony, knockabout satire. This is one English tradition that—we can be thankful—has not died even among the serious left: delight in extreme, preposterous silliness. The characters keep turning into absurdist cartoons.

"Devised and directed by Mike Leigh" is the customary credit for Leigh's work in the theatre, television, and films. His method is to set up "a structural surrounding" and then ask his actors to "find their characters." He explains, "Characters develop, then relationships, and these I monitor and follow and push toward a dramatic conclusion of some kind, so that you get a microcosm of society through improvisation." This doesn't explain how he gets so much rambunctious comedy out of the actors, but it does help to explain why "High Hopes" limps along: it isn't really conceived as a narrative film. It's conceived as a

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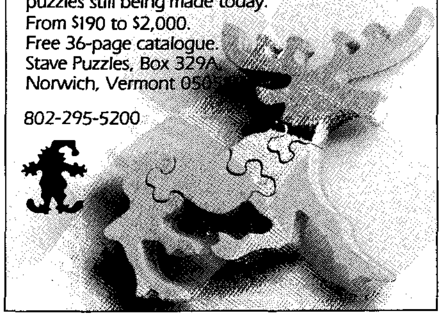
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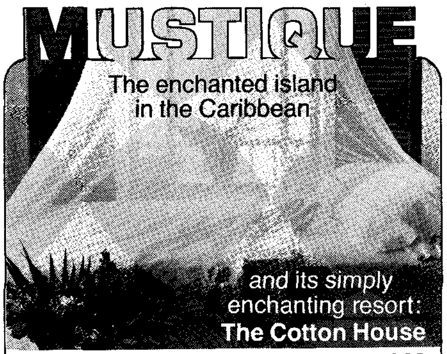
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group of skits that the director will extend and fuse. Yet the best things the actors do—such as the twits' pixie-ish sex play—often resist Leigh's fusing; they're funny out there on their own.

As the twitty nymph Laetitia, Lesley Manville (she was the young wife in "High Season") is a cutup, like Andrea Martin or Catherine O'Hara, with a little of Mary Beth Hurt's pertness. She has the manner of a colonial master in the section where the messenger's forgetful old mum (Edna Doré), a "council tenant" who lives next door to Laetitia's gentrified abode, has mislaid her key and asks for help. This passage combines cabaret humor (the unfeeling Laetitia) with kitchen-sink realism (the tired, confused mum), and even though the disparity between the two modes is funny I kept waiting for the modes to come together—for the old woman with her wandering mind to score off smug young Laetitia. A skit like this might be liberated if it were in a revue. The way Leigh uses it, it has a significance that curdles it. Almost everything in the movie that's jokey and distorted and grotesque plays off the "reality" of the failing old woman's misery.

The film's virulent contempt for Martin (Philip Jackson), the newly rich car salesman, goes way beyond his slobby insensitivity and horniness and Toryism. It probably goes back to the bohemian left's traditional snobbish hatred of the prospering middle class (and people who move to the suburbs). The left can be really good haters, aristocrats of hatred. But Martin's scenes don't do anything except indict him. On the other hand, the pretentiousness of his social-climber wife, Valerie (Heather Tobias), is so hog-wild that it has a shrill, comic-strip kick to it. She's a laughing case of nerves.

As if to confound the viewer, scenes that our instincts tell us shouldn't work—the ones, for example, that show the sound, loving relationship between Cyril, the messenger, and his dark-eyed, dark-haired Shirley—are the bedrock of the movie. Ruth Sheen's Shirley is long-legged and has protruding upper teeth that give her a little-kid grin, and Philip Davis's Cyril is stocky, with scroungy blond hair and beard, and specs and buckteeth. Sheen once played Olive Oyl on the stage, and Shirley towers over her man in

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that gauche, lanky way; she's both plain and beautiful, a Madonna who has been deprived of a babe. Everything that Shirley does is expressive, and clearly Cyril appreciates her. They're believable mates, even though the irony that the only true marriage is that of the unmarried pair can stick in your craw, along with their spontaneity, their unforced smiles, their open eyes turned to the future, and the pot smoking that marks them as good people.

Mike Leigh is an original; he doesn't just bring out characters—he brings out eccentric personalities. And his work with the cinematographer Roger Pratt is simple yet visionary. The film is never drab, never ordinary. Leigh is a real filmmaker, and his political vision gives his work substance and conviction. But he's shaping sentimental screwball microcosms. If an artist can be said to be corrupting absurdism, that's what he's doing. He uses absurdism to modernize realism, to syncopate it. It still drags its feet.

THE Touchstone/Disney executives must make a coach's speech to cheer on their writers and directors: "Your movie will succeed only if it's the dumbest movie of the decade." Francis Veber, who wrote and directed "Three Fugitives," went at the task strenuously, and, having already made the French film this one is based on, he had a jump start. (The film is now first at the nation's box offices.) Veber offers a lout's value system and queasy pedophiliac overtones. Big, gruff Nick Nolte plays a veteran armed robber, just released from prison, who goes to a bank to open a small account and is taken hostage by slight Martin Short, a terrified twerp of an amateur holdup man. Short's motive isn't meant as a joke: he needs money, to keep his six-year-old daughter (Sarah Rowland Doroff) in a special school—she has been mute since her mother died, two years earlier. That's the setup: the three are variously chased, and chase each other. During all this, Nolte keeps whamming Short on the head, using him as a punching bag, and the child—she's a poker-faced miniature Isabelle Adjani—ignores her devoted father. He's too small for her. She's smitten by big, blond, blue-eyed Nolte. One night, when he collapses, she cuddles against him; she speaks when she's in danger of losing him, and in a near-obscene moment she looks into his eyes adoringly, touching her face to a pale-blue stuffed animal he has given her, rubbing against it teasingly, seductively. There's a lewd sneakiness about this crumbum farce. Everything in it seems designed to humiliate the father, and you can't tell what's going on when Short—ostensibly for purposes of disguise—is dressed as a woman and the three form a nuclear family.

Veber made his reputation by adapting Jean Poiret's play "La Cage aux Folles" to the screen: the movie made fun of macho pretensions. "Three Fugitives" is a salute to macho. (The head of Disney is a big guy.) My guess is that Veber desperately threw in his repertory of tricks, and that, working in this country, he didn't have the instinctive understanding to blend the different elements. (Maybe nobody could have blended them; certainly nobody should have.) Even Haskell Wexler's wonderfully realistic cinematography doesn't fit the movie: it doesn't go with the stylized people-getting-banged-in-the-face material and the oozing pathos. He lighted something that shouldn't have seen the light of day.
—PAULINE KAEL

• •

MOON CLOCK

Like an oarless boat through midnight's watery
ghosthouse, through lumens and shallows
of shadow, under smoky light that the full moon
reflects from snowfields to ceilings, I drift
on January's tide from room to room, pausing
by the wooden clock with its pendulum that keeps
the beat like a heart certainly beating, to wait
for the pause allowing passage
to repose's shore—where all waves halt
upreared and stony as the moon's Mycenaean lions.
—DONALD HALL

DANCING

Classical and Modern

IN the old days of postmodern dance—from around 1962 up until five or six years ago—choreographers used to send out press releases tersely announcing "A Concert of Dance" or "New Dance Work." A title might be given, if one had been chosen; otherwise, the work was not described or characterized in any way. This practice was in line with certain assumptions about dance—that it spoke for itself and expressed nothing outside itself, that it was its own subject. "Dance" was dancing; its artistic substance could be whatever the choreographer wished to make it, provided that it was *pure*, with no programmatic content, or none that could be announced in advance. So entrenched was this view of dance that every time Jules Feiffer's cartoon appeared of the modern dancer in her leotard and ponytail, announcing "A dance to spring," you laughed right away, without bothering to read on and see what the dance was "about." The colleges still taught this stuff, and some woebegone companies still performed it, but in the climate of classical postmodernist New York dance nothing could have been more anachronistic.

Now in its postclassical phase, postmodern dance seems to be about anything but itself. Though it hasn't exactly reverted to the wistful, life-affirming dance-to-spring days, it has assiduously reprogrammed its aesthetic. I open my mail, and this is the sort of thing that falls out:

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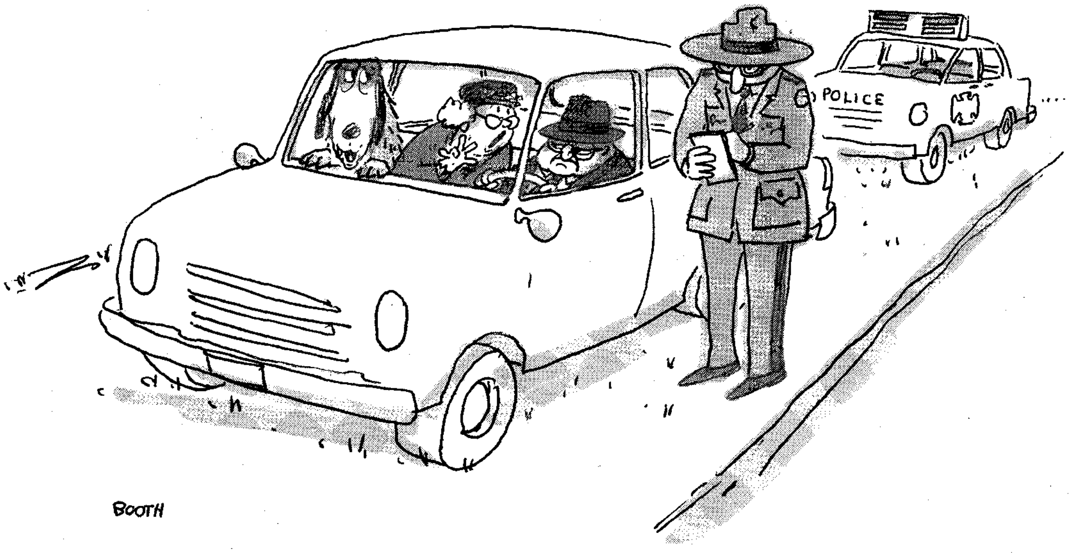
Even choreographers of the old persuasion find it necessary to furnish advance descriptions. For Stephen Petronio's latest concert, the Kitchen sent out a barrage of information not only about the première (" 'AnAmnesia' unfurls at a relentless pace . . .") but about Petronio's work in general. It was not a lot of help. "Mr. Petronio's group work combines a charged physicality with an architectural vision," the press kit told me. "The individuality of the dancers stands out against the compositional use of their bodies as pillars, spirals, and walls of movement."

But I went to Petronio's concert and found it as bewildering as the language of the press release had made it sound. The chunky sharp-edged shapes and inelastic rhythms appeared blocked and inarticulate, because the releasing mechanism wasn't where Petronio seemed to be seeking it—in devices of production rather than inside the movement itself. It's very strange to sit through an intelligently arranged, well-rehearsed, cleanly delivered program of dance and to realize that everyone on the stage, including the choreographer, is depending on externals to make the meaning clear: on scenery and costumes and gestural oddments, such as some finicky hand-and-finger positions that get projected in photographic blowups. It almost seems as if without the paraphernalia the meaning *would* be clear, in a dense kind of way. But choreographers who once trusted to movement are now building onto it a scaffolding to support a whole other order of suggestion.

Mark Taylor is another choreographer who does disciplined, sophisticated work, and who seems seriously interested in music, too. Not many choreographers are; there has been a general return to music in postmodern circles, but not to music that one would care to hear more than once. In "Xanadu/The Millions" Taylor set a long suite of dances to an amplified cello solo composed and played by Elise Tobin, with bass guitar and synthesizer. The aural mix was mellower and more attractive than the harsh Peter Gordon score used by Petronio, and Taylor's dances had a corresponding sinuosity and strength. But Taylor, too, went outside his means for meaning—to Italo Calvino's book of prose poems about Marco Polo, "Invisible Cities," quotations from which alternated with the music. At Performance Space 122, where the audience sat on both sides of the stage, it was extremely difficult to read the dances as a logical progression; there seemed to be nothing connecting them internally or with Calvino's book except some Oriental postures and an intermittent current of erotic violence. Maybe Marco Polo, trying wordlessly to report on his travels to Kublai Khan, bringing him souvenirs, was supposed to be an emblem of the choreographer trying to communicate with his audience. From William Weaver's translation: "The connections between one element of the story and another were not always obvious to the emperor; the objects could have various meanings: a quiver filled



"Yoo-hoo! My husband gets the senior-citizen discount! Yoo-hoo, Officer, yoo-hoo!"

with arrows could indicate the approach of war, or an abundance of game, or else an armorer's shop; an hourglass could mean time passing, or time past, or sand, or a place where hourglasses are made." However, the feeling I got was that ambiguity was Taylor's problem, not his theme.

Connections in the work of David Gordon are always deeply pleasing, and since they start appearing right at the beginning of an evening there's no anxiety about how the various layers of material are going to fit together. At the start of "United States," the newest Gordon piece to be seen in New York (at the Brooklyn Academy), we hear a tape of Robert Frost talking to students; Frost mentions Mozart, and in a minute a Mozart piano concerto begins; the dancers, already onstage and moving, move to the music. Other links are more subtle, but links keep on coming, by means of free association, and Gordon doesn't avoid obvious ones. The pattern has to be sturdy enough to last an evening.

Gordon is a member of the classical postmodernist generation, and though he has always been a collagist, he still holds the purist view that a work of art is always and only about itself, however many other subjects it appears to have. "United States" is a three-part evening constructed from writings and musical compositions having to do with places Gordon knows well—Minnesota, New York, and San Francisco, with New England (Robert Frost) sandwiched in between. Frost becomes the compère of the evening, a kind of stand-in for Gordon himself; when Frost says "We rise out of disorder into order" (and the dancers on the stage mime confusion), we understand that to be the process Gordon is engaged in demonstrating. Gradually, as the rest of his construction comes lumbering into view and begins to resemble a Rube Goldbergian invention, we understand the nature of the process to be cause and effect. Press a button in one part of the piece and a bell rings in another part; pull a lever here and a door opens somewhere else onto a vista that "explains" a previous reference and sets the stage for further development. A voice speaks of nostalgia as "a remembering forward." No matter how far afield we go—and, what with "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" cropping up in the New York section, and pop songs about San Francisco, we do get pretty far from Robert Frost—we don't lose the thread that pulls us back. Gordon's Pop-art sensibility keeps the evening light, and his discipline keeps the musical-comedy elements from running away with the show. The piece isn't really about any of the places it visits. It prefers legend to truth, and yet its clichés are real; it is true to culture in America.

The richest part of the evening is the dual-system adaptation of "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" as New York street theatre and New York stage theatre. Colloquial dance movement, which Gordon favors, is better suited to Richard Rodgers than it is to Mozart, and it functions here almost as a parody of higher dance forms. But I don't want to suggest that the way it functions in other parts of the piece isn't also interesting. In fact, I was fascinated by the choreography—both the Rube Goldbergian logic of it, setting out in pure-dance terms the operation of the piece as a whole, and the range of performance it inspired, from solo turns such as Valda Setterfield's endearingly batty Jeanette MacDonald (in the San Francisco section) to ensemble work as meticulous as that of a submarine crew under attack. When Frost comes back at the end to talk about what he has elsewhere called "the sound of sense," Gordon celebrates the moment with a mime chorus precisely timed to the rhythm of Frost's words. The mime is Gordonesque: simple conversational gestures of the head and hands, arranged in phrasal units. It's a breathtaking moment, with the great poet, the champion of popular speech, appearing to endorse the uses of colloquial movement. But it's nothing that Gordon hasn't earned.

"United States," an ongoing work, has attracted a good bit of attention because of the way it is being funded, by a sponsoring network represented in the changing geography of the piece. More locations are planned, but the continuing interest of "United States" lies in the way Gordon adds them up to form a whole. "How to Make a Piece" would not be a bad subtitle, particularly at this moment, when his procedures are being imitated but without a controlling vision. Gordon used to produce his work exclusively in downtown loft theatres, and he would have his dancers talk, enunciating themes that would be developed in dance. On opera-house stages, talking is impractical; he now uses voice-overs. But on smaller stages, like the Joyce, dancers this season burst into speech all the time. In Yoshiko Chuma's "Da Costakada Da Da: A Letter to Van Gogh," they spoke a mixture of languages in a kind of unconscious parallel to the incomprehensible choreography; in Monica Levy's "Hesitation Waltzes," they presumed to startle us with remarks like "A stranger mistook me for his wife." License to talk is not enough; you have to find an occasion for it, as Gordon has time and again. Yet Gordon doesn't really do as a model for a generation so unlike his own in its eagerness to assault the audience. His style is too easygoing, and there's a resolute disinterestedness in his method that can seem passive. Though "United States" is true to American culture, it isn't profoundly true, and the young and restless can come away with the feeling that all the things Gordon has put into it are there only because they make this ingenious pattern.

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The Joyce held a series devoted to women choreographers called Womanworks, as if it were unusual for women to be active in modern dance. Of the pieces on view, the solos arranged by the veteran dancer-choreographer Annabelle Gamson stood out for their flawless dynamics and compelling use of stage space. The most promising work of the rising generation was that of Bebe Miller and Company, formed in 1984. Though Miller presented story situations, she didn't use speech or any other extra-dance device, and her movement palette was broad enough for her to shift styles from one to the other of her two pieces, "Habit of Attraction" and "Thick Sleep," with no loss of force. There was also fresh and shapely movement in Sally Silvers' quartet "Moebius" before it declined into garrulity. In general, most of the works in Womanworks went on too long or were composed in phrases too short for their over-all length. Almost none of them exhibited rhythmic versatility in respect to a mood or a situation. And moods, situations, emotions are clearly in.

In Dance Chance, a series at Dance Theatre Workshop, presenting more women choreographers, Molissa Fenley danced her "Provenance Unknown," a long solo to Philip Glass music, in a style and demeanor suggestive of the romanticism of the dance-to-spring era. Fenley last season actually did do a dance to spring—she danced bare-breasted to Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring." The Fenley of "Provenance Unknown" enacted a rite more demure, but one that stretched her modest range as a dancer to the breaking point. Normally, Fenley's style is aerobic; here it was classical academic. This is a heterodox time, but the fact is that Fenley had to fake her turnout, and the only space she could usefully command was a wedge right in front of her. Her movements were complete in terms of intensity of effort but not in terms of plasticity. Everything else was gestural filigree, and wimpy filigree at that.

Fenley is not the only choreographer who seems to think that emotion has to do with gesture. Next on the program was a piece by Wendy Perron that began with two exceptionally well-composed dance duets for two couples who spelled each other. Spatial planes were clearly indicated; dynamics were forcefully explored. Suddenly, some Schubert piano music started up, and the choreographer came out in masculine attire and did a slow downstage cross while performing small-scale mimetic movements. What did this forty-ish woman in drag have to do with the two couples? We could only speculate, for the piece ended as soon as she had made her exit. She could have been the Spirit of Androgyny Past. She could have been Age, Time, an hourglass, or a person who sold cheap watches. Whatever she was, an interesting dance had become a boring drama.

Elizabeth Streb's pieces, which are sports-minded and task-oriented, insistently rule out emotion. I have always found them gruelling and flavorless, but on this program they were refreshing. In "Little Ease," Streb leaped inside a box where, able neither to stretch out nor to sit up, she looked about as comfortable as Alice inside the White Rabbit's cottage. For four minutes or so, Streb tossed and turned with enormous effort, banging into the sides of her prison and betraying no reaction to her predicament. Still betraying no reaction, she leaped out. As it always does in pieces as stern as this, emotion crept in the back door. And in pieces as honest as this the emotion has the power of a true theatrical event.

THE premières at New York City Ballet this season are both by Peter Martins. "Beethoven Romance" is a depiction of the ever-expanding capacities of Kyra Nichols. In pas-de-deux form, it strikes exactly the right balance between Nichols and her partner, Adam Lüders; she is all but self-sufficient, yet she doesn't domineer or overpower him. "Mozart Serenade" is an equally tactful piece, for four pairs of soloists, backed by four demi-soloists, all girls, and a corps of eight, ditto. Everyone gets a moment in which to impress us, and the costumes, by Barbara Matera, look expensive. There is also an element of homage. In Balanchine's "Mozartiana," the women wear black or white-over-black tutus. Here the corps is in black velvet, with the four demis in graphite and the soloists in dove gray. (The corps has the best of the deal; the cut of the bodices makes the other dancers look thick-waisted.) The courtly style and symmetrical construction recall Balanchine, while the Nichols-Lüders pas de deux is dressed by Heather Watts and lit by Mark Stanley as if to suggest Jerome Robbins' "In the Night."

In short, the two new ballets, which are being shown together, make up a charming intramural spectacle. But aren't they a bit more déjà vu than absolutely necessary? Hasn't Peter Martins already given us that Mozart ballet in "Les Petits Riens," and with some of the same dancers? And isn't "Beethoven Romance" just another of the little showcases with which Martins both fulfills and evades the task of creating for ballerinas of rank? It's not that I don't admire the work Martins has done here; it's that I think I'm beginning to see in it a desperation and a desire to please that could jeopardize any really good work he might do in the future. He has lapsed into formula

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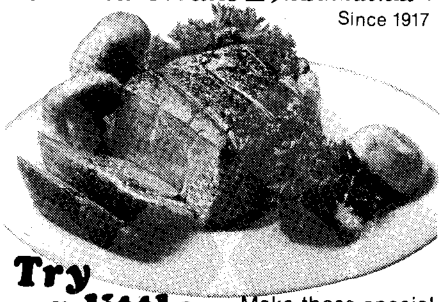

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composing, defined by areas of need: Stars, Soloists, Kids. Under Balanchine, he made ballets on assignment. Now that he can, in theory at least, do anything he likes, he seems to enjoy himself less.

It was interesting to see, on a Saturday matinée, the two new pieces together with "The Waltz Project," which was the best work that Martins did, or anybody did, on the company for last season's American Music Festival. Something happens right away in "The Waltz Project" which doesn't happen in either of Martins' Mozart ballets or in "Beethoven Romance," and that is a sense of excitement and intimacy between the dancers. And it keeps on happening, even though the piece is too long, repeats its effects, and at the end overplays its hand. You watch every minute of it, and, whether you're amused, awed, exasperated, or repelled, you're held by it. I imagine this is because Martins really wanted to make it, or got caught up in it as he was making it.

There might be another reason for the peculiar liveliness of "The Waltz Project"—its material is congenial. Martins, one of the great classical dancers of our time, has become a choreographer fluent in the rhetoric of classicism. But so far he hasn't proved himself a true believer. He seems to harbor mental reservations about the modernity and relevance of classicism; to him classical might almost be the opposite of modern. Especially when it comes to relations between the sexes, Martins seems to see the "classical" world as harmonious and dull and the "modern" world as challenging, dissonant, and alive. "The Waltz Project" picks up certain impulses from his very first piece, "Calcium Light Night," and rides with them. His comfort is palpable. I even think his ear is better than it is in the two new pieces. Also, it's a Soloist Ballet, which means he can relax a little—he doesn't have to worry about accommodating stars. A curious fact is that though Martins has presented and re-presented the company's young dancers in his classical pieces, he hasn't succeeded in making any of them stars, whereas Heather Watts and Jock Soto were established in major roles in Martins' Stravinsky ballets. Now it is Helene Alexopoulos, implacably lyrical in "The Waltz Project," who is on her way.

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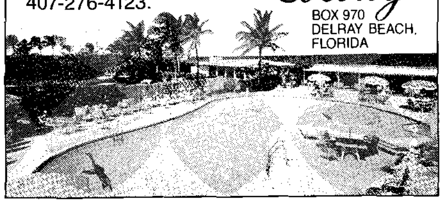

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MUSICAL EVENTS

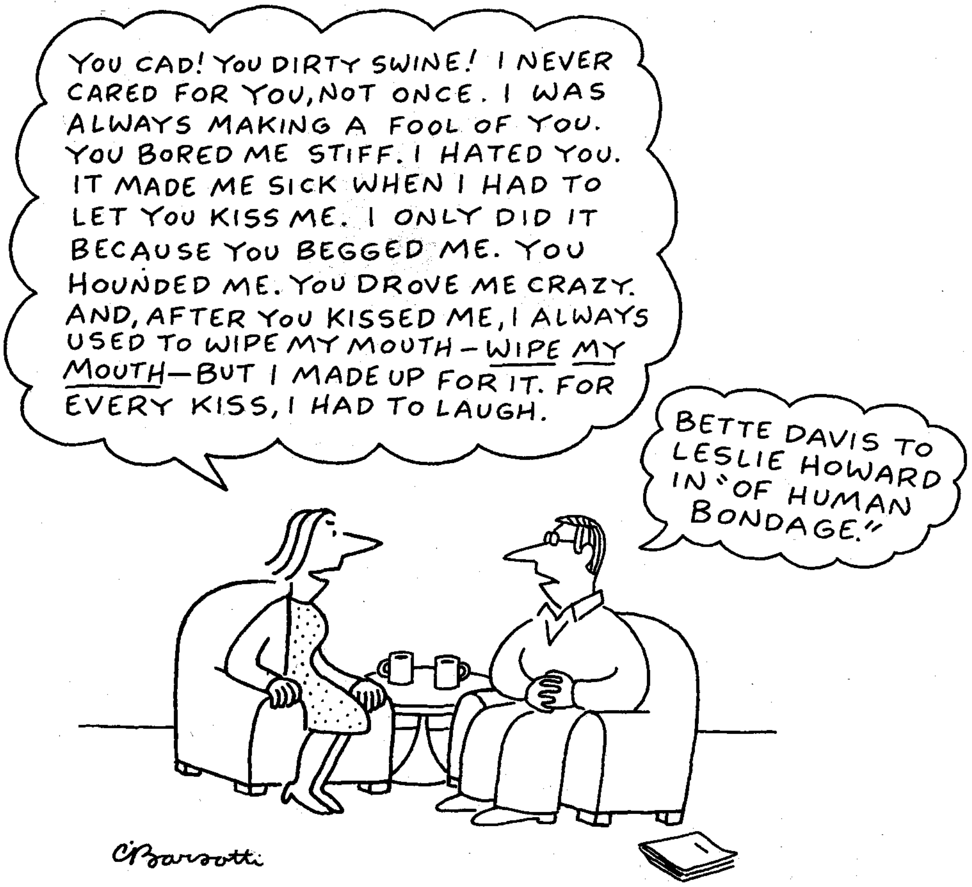
The Princess and the Knight

ITALIAN opera in the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century presents a confused and busy picture. The familiar landmarks are "Otello" (1887), "Cavalleria Rusticana" (1890), "Pagliacci" (1892), "Falstaff" (1893), and "La Bohème" (1896). Around them cluster works by Puccini, Franchetti, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Giordano, Cilea that bear—in different degrees, but sometimes bewilderingly mingled—the diverse influences of verismo, of Wagner, and of Massenet. Some of them—Puccini's "Manon Lescaut," Giordano's "Andrea Chénier"—are heard quite often. Some—Franchetti's "Asrael," Smareglia's "Nozze Istriane"—have become rare. (The Columbus quincentenary will no doubt bring a revival of Franchetti's immense "Cristoforo Colombo," which was first performed in Genoa in 1892.) Others are revived from time to time. In recent years, Amato has done Gomes's "Lo Schiavo"; Bel Canto has done Franchetti's "Germania"; New Jersey has done Mascagni's half-veristic, half-mystic "Iris" and his "Zanetto," with "Lodoletta" to follow soon. And, last month, Eve Queler's Opera Orchestra of New York gave two concert performances of Giordano's "Fedora," one at Hunter College, with a cast of young American singers, and one in Carnegie Hall, with international principals.

Puccini's operas are all but surefire. The others depend on their performers to an extent that can make a listener—stirred, perhaps against higher instincts, by what a Caniglia, a Milanov, a Callas may have brought to the leading role—start to distrust any judgments about the absolute worth of a score. Just so, Sarah Bernhardt, displaying high art in preposterous melodramas, drew encomiums from critics of otherwise severe taste. "Fedora," less ambitious than its predecessor, "Andrea Chênier," less well made and musically less interesting than Puccini's "Tosca," offers to a potent prima donna a big, emotional acting role. The opera is based on Sardou's "Fédora" (1882), which, like his "La Tosca" (1887), was written for Bernhardt. Giordano, it is said, saw Bernhardt's Fédora in his student days, in Naples, and asked Sardou for the operatic rights. A decade later, after the success of "Andrea Chénier," he was granted them, and his "Fedora" appeared in 1898, a year before "Tosca." The heroine was the beautiful, passionate Gemma Bellincioni (the first Santuzza); photographs show her alluring, patrician presence in the role. The hero was the young Caruso, who looks less romantic but who evidently conquered by vocal prowess. (Each of them recorded an aria from the opera.) "Fedora" soon made its way round the world. At the Met, it was sung by Lina Cavalieri and later by Maria Jeritza. Maria Caniglia, Maria Callas (who gave six Scala performances in 1956), and Magda Olivero (who sang the role in New Jersey in 1971) have also been famous Fedoras.

Act I is exposition: Princess Fedora Romazov, in the apartments of Count Vladimir Andreyevich, her betrothed, awaits his arrival; he is carried in dying of a gun wound; and she swears vengeance on the assassin, who is believed to be Count Loris Ipanov, a suspected nihilist. (For a lark, the Prince of Wales once took the mute role of Vladimir at a Bernhardt performance of the play.) In Act II, at a Paris party, Fedora extracts from Loris, who has fallen in love with her, a confession that he was the killer; dashes off a denunciation to St. Petersburg, throwing in his brother's name as an accomplice; but learns later that he shot in self-defense, after surprising his wife and Vladimir in a guilty embrace. The act closes with a rapturous love duet. In Act III, the lovers' idyll is ended by news from Russia: Loris's brother, denounced by an unknown woman, has died in prison, and his mother has died of grief. Fedora implores Loris to forgive this unknown woman—with such eloquence and passion that he guesses her identity. She drinks a cup of poisoned tea and dies in his arms.

Sardoodledom indeed! Bernard Shaw—writing well before either "La Tosca" or "Fédora" had been musicked—called "La Tosca" an "old-fashioned, shiftless, clumsily constructed, emptyheaded turnip ghost of a cheap shocker." He derided what were hailed as "well-made" plays—"plays in which two hours of intrigues and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BETTE DAVIS TO LESLIE HOWARD IN "OF HUMAN BONDAGE."
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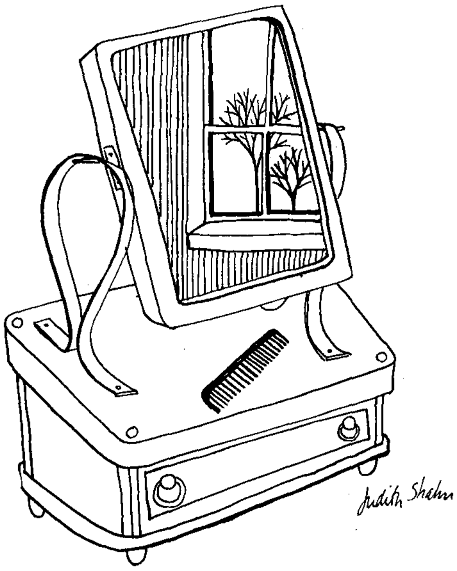
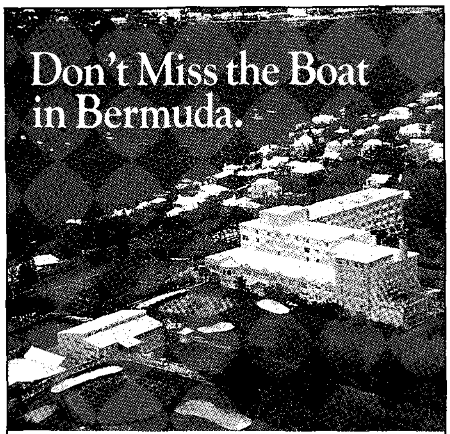
telegrams are wasted in bringing about some situation which the audience would have accepted at once without any contrivance at all." Sardou's—and Giordano's—strong, tear-jerking final situation turns on Fedora's curious, careless failure, once she has learned the truth, to countermand the denunciation. Other loose ends in the opera—what is Fedora doing in Vladimir's apartments late at night? why does Loris, who lives across the street and is Vladimir's crony, know nothing of the proposed marriage?—are due to compressions by Giordano's librettist, Arturo Colautti. Sardou, master of the "well-made" play, accounted for those things. The awkward construction of the central act—in effect, a duet interrupted by an interlude that represents the passing of hours—results from the collapsing of Sardou's Acts II and III into one. A Swiss setting for the last act is another operatic invention, to allow for a peasant chorus and the sentimentally apt song of a shepherd boy, accordion-accompanied. (Its effect was not lost on Puccini when he composed "Tosca.") Sardou kept the scene in France.

"Fedora" is an odd opera, better than it ought to be. There are only two tunes that stick: the lilting waltz that opens the second act, and the tenor's famous "Amor ti vieta," which lasts all of ninety seconds. Giordano had no sustained command of memorable melodic invention. What he did have—"Andrea Chénier" and "Fedora" both show it—is instinct, vitality and honesty of feeling, and a gift for declamation that tells. In those ways he is closer to Verdi than the more aspirant, more pretentious Mascagni (after "Cavalleria") and Leoncavallo (after "Pagliacci"). Soprano and tenor are the only principals. To fill out the evening, Giordano added to Act I a brief coachman's aria. (Kim Josephson, at Hunter, and Gary Ketterman, in Carnegie, both seized their chance.) And at the Act II party the French diplomat De Siriex sings a *canzonetta russa*, and the enthusiastic, shuttle-headed Countess Olga Sukarev responds with a *canzonetta francese* in praise of Veuve Clicquot. De Siriex's song is in fact Alabiev's "The Nightingale" speeded up from *andante espressivo* to *allegro brillante*. (It was once a famous piece: Liszt transcribed it for piano; Rosinas used to sing it in the lesson scene of "Il Barbiere," and sopranos from Marcella Sembrich to Lily Pons recorded it. In the Public Library I found a mid-century Italian publication in the key that Giordano uses.) Olga's *canzonetta* reproduces rhythms of the second-act finale in "Die Fledermaus"—an operetta that reached Naples in Giordano's youth. (Did champagne suggest its melody, or is it, too, a borrowing?) The songs are extraneous to the plot; Giordano marked them as optional cuts, as he did Olga's aria in Act III, in praise of her latest enthusiasm, biking ("Gioja dei muscoli! dei nervi ebbrezza!"). In successive editions of "Fedora" he snicked and snipped. The early librettos show lines whose setting was never published, and modern librettos, corresponding to the score, show lines that don't scan. (The Opera Orchestra libretto, reproduced from one issued with a CBS recording, threw metrics to the winds, and chopped Colautti's verses into fragments.) But Miss Queler included all three numbers. In the theatre, they might hold things up; at a concert performance it was good to have them.

At Hunter, Sharon Spinetti began by portraying a slinky, sultry Fedora; as the evening progressed, she and Giordano matched forces, and she was rather effective in the last act. Miss Queler had assembled an able cast. The Loris, Paul Lyon, tended to strain, but the bass Robert Briggs, as the police officer Grech, was good, and the baritone Robert Heimann, as De Siriex, was very good, with lively words, eyes, and stage personality. In Carnegie, Eva Marton seemed miscast in the title role. She played a provincial singer endowed with a very loud voice that she was willing to push into sounds that seared. It's not always so: moments in Miss Marton's Brünnhildes have revealed a potentially sensitive, emotional, generous artist, awaiting musical and dramatic direction to refine her approach. I hope that after the forthcoming Met "Salome" I can write about her differently. But her Fedora was largely a washout: score-bound, loud, sometimes unsteady, without verbal or dramatic intensity. Nunzio Todisco, the Loris—a last-minute replacement for Giuseppe Giacomini—made heavy weather of the solos but delivered the rest accurately and ardently. Harolyn Blackwell was light casting for Olga. Carlos Serrano, the De Siriex, was a baritone forcing his voice too hard, not bringing the words to life. Dwayne Croft was a clear, dapper Désiré. Miss Queler has a feeling for the way the music should go, and her conducting was spirited.



FROM 1889 to 1893, while one young Italian composer after another rose to prominence and La Scala also played "Meistersinger," "Tannhäuser," and "Lohengrin," Thomas's "Hamlet," Bizet's "Pêcheurs de Perles," and Massenet's "Le Cid," Verdi composed "Falstaff," insisting that he was doing so for his amusement, that no production would necessarily result. In old age, his resentments—at being considered a back number, even a "brothel composer" (as he felt Boito had once dubbed him)—gradually fell from him. The success of "Otello" had given him new confidence. At the close of "Falstaff," the young people are triumphant, but the old man, though mocked and humiliated, has the last word. The way the opera ends—the Triumph of Falstaff—was devised by Verdi himself, not by Boito. The libretto drew from him some of his most beautiful, refined, and inventive music. He composed it in high spirits, in bursts of bounding inspiration. A Scala première was planned; he would show the young generation that the old man still had life in him, and that Wagner—whose "Meistersinger" had opened the 1889-90 Scala season and run for sixteen performances—wasn't the only great composer who could write a comedy. The première drew near. Giulio Ricordi, the head of a publishing empire that extended from La Scala through the opera houses of



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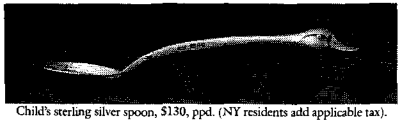

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the world, was concerned about the staging. But "Falstaff," Verdi answered, was an easy opera to stage. Although its second scene has elaborate ensemble entrances and exits,

> nothing is easier and simpler than its mise-en-scène if the designer creates a set as I saw it while I was composing the music. Merely a large, realistic garden, with paths, clumps of bushes and plants here and there to allow at will for concealment, revealment, disappearance, as demanded by the drama and the music.

In this letter to Ricordi, Verdi sketched the stage plan of what he had in mind and asked Ricordi to insure that the designer, Adolfo Hohenstein, conformed to it. He also sent his stage plan for the fourth scene: "The set must be almost completely clear, to allow for action and to show clearly the principal groupings: at the screen, at the laundry basket, at the window." There were no technical problems to speak of, he continued, except, maybe, the basket, and that "presents no difficulties unless needless complications are introduced." As for the lighting,

> all that is needed is a little *darkness* for the park scene—but, be it well understood, a *darkness* that leaves the singers' faces visible. Not lighting effects like those of the last act of "La Wally" [Catalani's opera, produced at La Scala in 1892]: very beautiful, if you like, but they ruined the whole dramatic effect, so that the piece ended frigidly!

Verdi evidently wanted, and achieved, a straightforward, unfussy production. Well before the première, Ricordi, Boito, and Hohenstein came to him at Sant'Agata with models of the proposed sets, and figurines to represent the singers, and under his supervision they worked out how "Falstaff" should go. What really mattered, he said, was the vocal style and the casting. Bellincioni, for all her intelligence, would be too "sentimental" a Nannetta, and Calvé impossible. Mistress Ford, whom he once described as the protagonist of the piece ("It's she who stirs the polenta"), needed *le diable au corps*. Guerrina Fabbri, despite her beautiful voice and her agility in "La Cenerentola," wouldn't do as Quickly, since the role required "singing and acting together, acting and singing, *canto-azione*, considerable *disinvoltura scenica* [stage savvy], and the right way of putting the stress on the syllable that counts"—qualities that Fabbri lacked. And so on. What Verdi required of his "Falstaff" singers is abundantly documented in letters,

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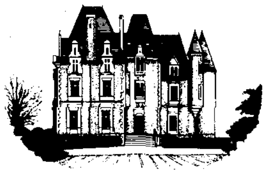

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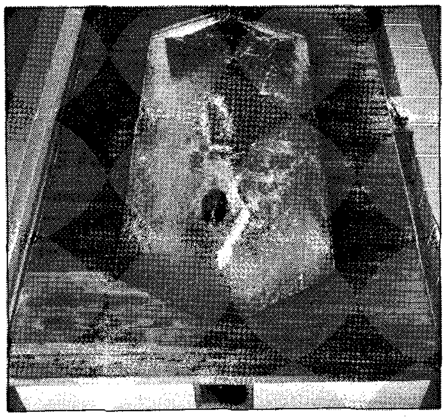

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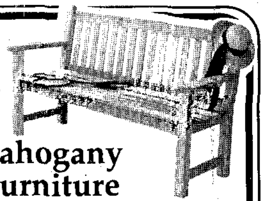

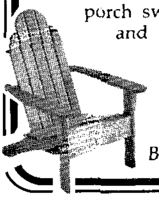

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and to some extent sonically. Victor Maurel's "Quand'ero paggio" is the only "creator's record" that survives (and it was made in 1907, by which time Maurel's huge ego had probably tempered the lessons that Verdi instilled), but we can hear in other repertory, and guess why Verdi chose for his first cast, Adelina Stehle (Nannetta), Virginia Guerrini (Mistress Page), Edoardo Garbin (Fenton), Antonio Pini-Corsi (Ford), and Vittorio Arimondi (Pistol). And discover why he rejected the lovely Bellincioni (whose Violetta he admired) and the lustrous Fabbri (who recorded her great Rossini and Bellini roles). What he wanted above all was savoring of the text, bringing the words to life with *disinvoltura scenica*. The great Falstaffs of my life have been Mariano Stabile, Tito Gobbi, and Donald Gramm. (Stabile first sang the role in 1921, for Toscanini at La Scala, but continued singing it for some thirty years.) All three can be heard in recordings. The Stabile recording to treasure is of a 1937 Salzburg production, conducted by Toscanini. Gobbi's, with Karajan, dates from 1956. In Boston and in New York, Gramm sang Falstaff in English, but the recording on sale, a videotape of his 1976 Glyndebourne performance, in Italian, also shows his Verdian command of vowel and consonant, timbre, timing, and vocal color.

Last year, the Welsh National Opera mounted a production of "Falstaff," directed by Peter Stein, of the Berlin Schaubühne, that was widely acclaimed. It went to Covent Garden. It is going to Milan. And this month it came to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, for four performances. The Academy, where once the Met used regularly to play, has embarked on a new venture, BAM Opera—Matthew Epstein the artistic director—that offers an alternative to Met routine: considered, carefully rehearsed productions. The Welsh "Falstaff" inaugurated it. Peter Sellars' production of Kurt Weill's "Kleine Mahagonny" and the Arts Florissants production of Lully's "Atys" come next.

This Welsh "Falstaff" was certainly considered and carefully rehearsed. Although it was sung in Italian, by a mainly British cast, it seemed a curiously German sort of show. When I saw Mr. Stein's "Otello," another acclaimed Welsh National production, in Cardiff, I thought his understanding of Verdian music drama less than satisfactory. At the close of Act I, Othello and Desdemona copulated on the cobbles, out in the piazza. In this "Falstaff," Mistress Quickly snuggles into Falstaff's lap while delivering her message; Nannetta, hair afloat, seems ever on the verge of a mad scene; Falstaff delivers the "Honour" monologue as a blackboard lecture. (England's leading Verdian, having travelled to Cardiff to see the show, couldn't sit it out.) Mr. Stein's success in "Otello" was above all with the choruses, which he handled with dynamism and precision that recalled Felsenstein's, but in patterns more stylized than those of the realistic Felsenstein production. Although the chorus is less important in "Falstaff," the high point of this staging is the final fugue: an animated but unfidgety realization of the way the music itself moves, in fine patterns of entries, crossings, groupings and regroupings.

The settings, by Lucio Fanti, and the costumes, by Moidele Bickel, are unattractive, but the half-timbered surrounds give Mr. Stein plenty of space to work in (no clutter in the fourth scene). The park is simply a curtained stage, bare but for the (ugly) central oak tree, which is flown out—as in the Zeffirelli production—for the "apotheosis." Although the scenes look simple, they took a long time to change. Donald Maxwell was a good Falstaff. The whole cast was very sure—a disciplined, able ensemble. But the orchestra, conducted by Richard Armstrong, sounded consistently loud, and the singers' exchanges were seldom conversational. It was all admirable, intelligent, adept. I didn't in the least want to walk out. But I missed spontaneity, characters, romance, and enjoyment of the words.

—ANDREW PORTER

●

ON SECOND THOUGHT DEPT.

[*From the Gainesville* (*Fla.*) *Sun*]

If caught sailing in a lightning storm away from the shore, boaters should place themselves away from any metal fittings including the mast and boom, according to Ewen Thomson, a University of Florida professor of electrical engineering and a lightning researcher. Lying or sitting in the direction of the length of the boat and staying low is also important, he said. Keep away from the water and try to stay dry.

"Also, it isn't a good idea to sit right on the bottom of the boat. But by the time you add all those things together, there's really no good place left to sit," he said.

THE ART WORLD

Lost and Found

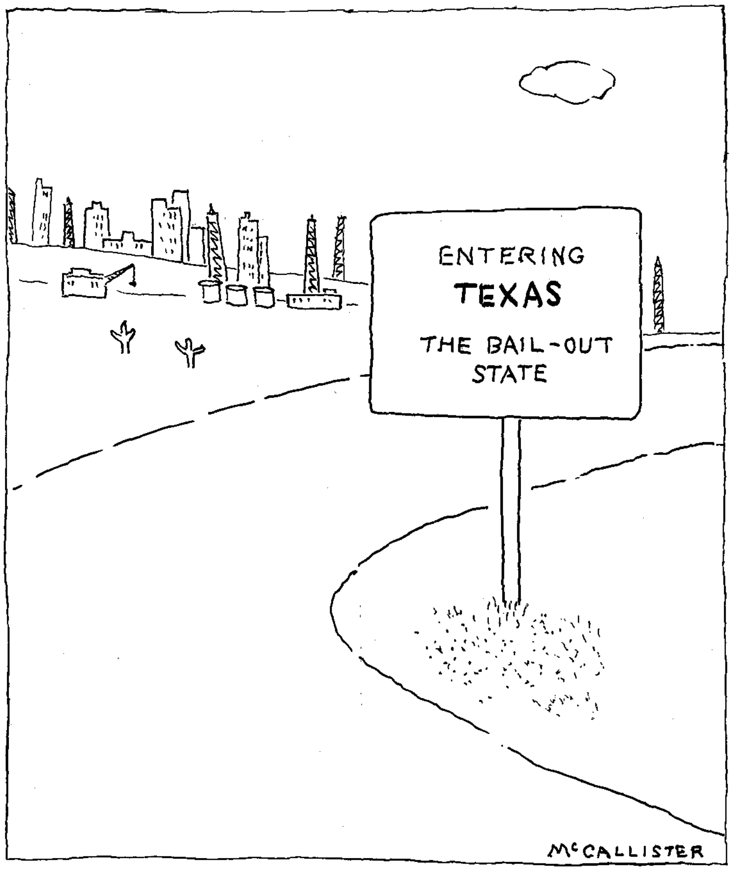
THE most shocking art in America is being made by the young New Yorker Jeff Koons. His exhibition this winter at the Sonnabend Gallery shocked people who claimed not to have been shocked by anything at all since the early sixties, and caused a scandal of a sort that was (especially in the year of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Armory show) almost touching in its re-creation of an earlier and more embattled era in the history of modern art.

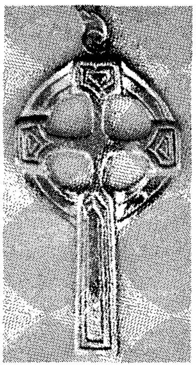
The power of Koons' art to shock is mysterious, because everything about it seems at first so familiar. In bald or polemical description, Koons' exhibition is likely to sound like one more weary Duchampian joke—yet another demonstration of the principle that art can be anything an artist chooses. At Sonnabend, Koons showed life-size porcelain and polychromed wood sculptures, executed in Italy by craftsmen who usually make the mantelpiece figurines one sees in discount shops on Fifth Avenue. The figures included a seven-foot-tall bear in a rainbow-striped T-shirt looming over a London bobby; a shivering beauty with a Farrah Fawcett haircut, hugging the Pink Panther to her bare bosom; a pair of midget bears, wild-haired and squat, clasping hands and grinning; a five-foot-tall Buster Keaton astride a donkey and with a chipmunk-cheeked bird perched on his shoulder; and Michael Jackson recumbent in a cream-and-gold jacket and holding his pet chimp, Bubbles.

People who hated these objects and people who took pleasure in them talked and wrote about them as though their imagery were haphazardly "appropriated," and of secondary importance to their intellectual material—to their demonstrations of some moral (or amoral) point. Many of the people who were most offended by the works wrote about them as if they were simply enlarged versions of commonplace chotchkes, and even suggested that they were objects borrowed from the kitsch of the thirties and forties. Koons' admirers saw these pieces as demonstrations of a satiric point, though one made without much apparent humor: that in our culture *all* art aspires to the condition of chotchkes, and that Koons simply accepts as inevitable what tonier kinds of art disguise behind a façade of high-mindedness or the cant of originality.

This may or may not be true, but it is not at all shocking. It is a conventional piety of our time, and has in the past decade helped create warehousefuls of priggish, diagrammatic art (including some of Koons' earlier work)—art that may have depressed some viewers and given others a gloomy satisfaction but has shocked no one. Koons' sculptures shock not because of their intellectual message but because of their physical presence. They are nightmarish. The contours of each piece are as chubby as Disney drawings, but their execution seems glacially slow, and they are, above all, *hard*—like Muppets who have just seen the Medusa. Far from being a detached comment on the place of art in our culture, they have the zombie-like gleam of something genuinely strange and obsessive. Koons is a Chagall in reverse—not a smooth operator trying to pass himself off as a naïf but a troubling naïf trying to pass himself off as a smooth operator. He outraged many people by making garish advertisements for his exhibition and running them in the art magazines. But what was most striking about the ads was that they didn't look like ads at all. They were amateurish tableaux: of the artist, two models in bikinis, and some of his objects. The images captured none of the shrewd, elliptical spirit of contemporary advertising; they suggested, instead, a thirteen-year-old's idea of advertising—me, sexy girls, and my stuff.

For all the rhetoric associated with Koons' art, it really has no traffic with the "processes of commodification." If the concept of "commodity" is in any way special to our culture, it is because we have manufactured a class of objects that possess certain qualities—that are, for instance, mass-produced, relatively inexpensive, quickly obsolescent, lacking in any sign of individual imagination. But all these qualities are almost the opposite of those of Koons' sculptures. (Some people may insist that these sculptures aren't commodities themselves but parodies of works of art that try not to look like commodities. But this idea is much too subtle to be shocking.) Koons' pieces are not, as a matter of plain fact, displaced commonplace objects, "readymades," at all. No works like these have ever been seen before on any scale. They are relentlessly *invented* objects, which derive their imagery and iconography from a narrow, specific, archaic band of American popular culture. They come from the empty interregnum of pop culture in the seventies (when,





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as it happens, Koons was an adolescent)—the world of limited animation, Sid and Marty Krofft's Christmas specials, "Charlie's Angels," the Pink Panther. (Michael Jackson seems to be the ringer in this company, except that Jackson's ideals of style appear to have been derived from a similar moment.)

Koons' work desecrates the sanctuary not of art but of anti-art, and this, I think, is what makes it shocking. His work refuses to resolve into pleasure: it suggests neither an enlarged sense of aesthetic possibility nor an easy position of condescension. Anti-art in the tradition of Duchamp's bicycle wheel has always carried within it an edge of self-sacrificing idealism; mocking conventional notions of beauty, it has also given us permission to look at the world again. Koons' new work is doggedly literal, and entirely about itself. If it recalls any earlier art, it is only certain kinds of mad realism, like the late paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Holman Hunt (whose vertiginous effects also depended on taking a miniature style—Quattrocento particularism—and making it oversized).

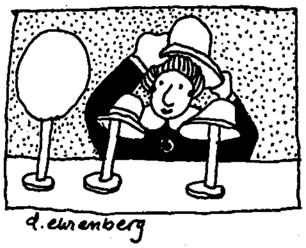
Koons is the *poète maudit* of American adolescence. His work summons up the world of the thirteen-year-old boy's bedroom—the meticulously assembled model planes on the dresser, the ratfink on the windowsill, the gleaming Miss December on the wall above the bed. It is an art of sniggering sexuality and of a weird, premature nostalgia—at once self-caressing and deliberately provocative. Koons' pet image—Buster Keaton mounted on a donkey, like Christ entering Jerusalem—is obviously intended to be a kind of symbolic self-portrait: the stone-faced comedian stoically suffering the indignities and absurdities of modern American life. But if Koons' work has any parallel in popular culture it is in the line of strange, self-isolating adolescent humor that runs from Harry Langdon to Andy Kaufman.

What is most disturbing in Koons' art, and what makes it in some way exemplary of our time, is the coupling of an inward-turning imagination with an affectless demeanor. In Koons' earlier work—basketballs in aquariums, molded-plastic vacuum cleaners displayed in Plexiglas boxes—the artist's eye and heart seemed at least in some kind of dry harmony, casting a cold glance on charmless objects. In the new work, a private childhood iconography—as eccentric in its way as Joseph Cornell's—is presented as though it could find no entry into the world except by taking part in the enveloping culture of contempt. The desire to make newly imagined things look still and vitiated seems to express a preference for death over life, and, even in a weary time, remains shocking.

THE work of the French artist Christian Liberté Boltanski takes for its physical material old school photographs, desk lamps, wrapping paper, corroded biscuit tins, shadows, and candlelight; for its human material the faces of the schoolchildren of postwar Dijon and of prewar Vienna; and for its intellectual material the thought that the loss of childhood is the first intimation of grownup grief. His signature pieces follow a simple plan. He takes enlarged, "found" black-and-white photographs of children's faces and places them on gallery walls. Some of the photographs are from old albums, some are from the archives of children's organizations, like the Mickey Mouse Club of France (a sober organization, on the evidence of the photographs: earless, and more elegant than our own Mickey Mouse Club), and some were taken by Boltanski himself. Before he enlarges the photographs, he crops them very closely, until they become all eyes and brows—a little like Fayum portraits. Then he puts each photograph in a tin frame, flanked by other tin frames, which are filled with dulled photographic reproductions of red or green Christmas paper. Sometimes these tin frames are mounted on the wall of a dimmed gallery, and sometimes Boltanski constructs a symmetrical freestanding platform of biscuit tins and sets three or four pictures of children above it, like images of saints above an altar. In many pieces he arranges three incandescent bulbs around each photograph, like candles around an icon. The black electrical cords fall down the wall, in front of the children's faces, and braid together to the floor.

In other pieces he puts a desk lamp with a flexible neck above the photograph; it hangs over the faces of the children like a third eye in the middle of the forehead (except that it shines in, not out).

Boltanski is famous in France. Until last year, he was known and admired in America mostly by a few collectors and curators, but last spring a large retrospective of his work began touring in this country. It opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, went to Los Angeles, and then, just before Christmas, came to the New Museum of Contemporary Art, on lower Broadway, where it remained until earlier this month. (Next it will go to Vancouver, Berkeley, and Toronto.) Boltanski's French admirers seem to admire his art for its evident artifice, and to see it as a form of gloomy philosophical criticism. Boltanski's enlarged photographs, according to this view, are an ironic commentary on the romantic cult of the child, and his work is one more moralizing attempt to demonstrate, in the contemporary French fashion, that the search for "natural" or "innocent" experience always ends with the discovery of a set of artificial signs and conventions. Boltanski's American admirers have tended to take his work at face value: treating ordinary children as if they were saints, most people here think, is Boltanski's way of reminding us of the sanctity of ordinary life.



Boltanski's favorite literary genre is the *fioretti*—the little stories from the life of St. Francis—and he likes to tell the story of his own birth as though it were one. He was born in Paris in 1944. His mother was a devout Catholic, his father a converted Jew. During the Occupation, Boltanski's father was ordered to report to the police, but instead he hid in the cellar of the family apartment building. In a sequence that belongs in a René Clément black comedy, Mme. Boltanski kept up the pretense that he had run out on his family, and continually maligned him brutally to the whole neighborhood, while M. Boltanski was down in the basement and she was visiting him every night. She became pregnant, and their son was born days after Paris was liberated. Boltanski's absurdly exemplary name simultaneously suggests his parents' faith, their history, and the heroic secular deliverance that saved the lives of all of them.

The first large piece that Boltanski made using borrowed photographs of children was the 1972 "Sixty-two Members of the Mickey Mouse Club in 1955," which was unlit. He started to experiment with artificial light, and slowly a new kind of work evolved—the "Monuments." They began as small pieces—four or five photographs in a simple structure of tin rectangles—but more recent ones have included as many as a hundred and forty photographs and three hundred lights.

In France, Boltanski's installations of photographs have consistently been associated with the idea (which seems to have originated with the French *philosophe* Roland Barthes) that those photographs which look the most "lifelike" are in essence images of death. In the catalogue essay for the touring exhibition Lynn Gumpert reiterates this interpretation. All photographs, she says, and especially documentary snapshots, represent "a kind of abrupt dive into literal death"—their stilled, paralyzed possession of a single moment and their "objectification" of a subject make us see living people as we will when they are dead.

This sounds impressive, but if it were true that all photographs are inevitably and essentially signs of mortality, then the almost melodramatic apparatus of Boltanski's work—the darkened rooms, the lights—would hardly be necessary. Perhaps Boltanski has simply discovered something latent in ordinary photographs that can make them, in special circumstances, elegiac. Part of his discovery involves a fact about photography: we can look at people's faces in photographs, and particularly in enlarged photographs, with a kind of intensity and intimacy that in life we normally reserve only for extreme emotional states—for a first look at someone we may sleep with, or a last look at someone we love. But in a larger sense what Boltanski has discovered about photographs is true about almost any casual souvenir of a human life. We find many things—old journals, forgotten letters, abandoned

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toys—moving for the same reason that we find these photographs moving. Boltanski's work seems to point to a subtler moral than the pedantic notion that all photographs are really death masks. Photographs aren't mortal; people are—and that fact is buried in any representation of any one of us. The game that Boltanski plays with photographs has power to move and engage us precisely because photographs are *not*, for the most part, used as symbols of mortality at all. Instead, he demonstrates that even the most casual representation of life suggests its end.

In the mid-nineteen-eighties, while reading a book about Jewish life in prewar Austria, Boltanski came across a 1931 photograph of the graduating class of the Chases *Gymnasium*, a Jewish high school in Vienna. There are twenty-three students in the picture, and one teacher. They are an appealing group. One of the boys in the back is mugging for the camera, striking a pose right out of the repertory of the Yiddish theatre, while the two girls beside him pretend to be swooning with love.

Boltanski doesn't know what happened to the children in the photograph. He rephotographed those adolescent faces and enlarged them, making them bigger than any of the faces in his earlier work—approximately two feet by three. At this scale, they lose all detail. Boltanski enhanced the effect by putting each of the enlarged photographs behind wire mesh. Then he built supports for them from old, rusting biscuit tins—two supports for each picture—and balanced the pictures against a wall above the tins. Clamped to the top of each photograph is a large black flexible desk lamp. The lamps illuminate the pictures, but they obscure them, too, creating a circle of reflected glare on each face.

Boltanski made many pieces of this kind, some using three or four photographs, others five or six. In some of the later pieces, the photographs are balanced on the biscuit tins; in others they are set on the floor or are hung on a wall. In the biggest, simplest, and most unforgettable piece, three rows of three pictures each are hung on a wall in a rectangle. They occupy the next-to-last room in the travelling exhibition.

As a group, these pieces are called

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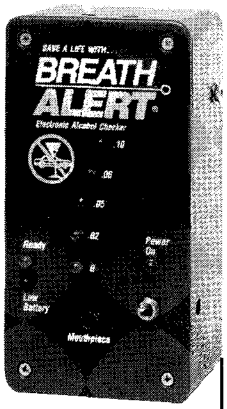

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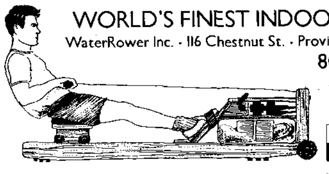

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HANDMADE IN EGYPT

by Boltanski "Altars to Chases High School," and they are, of course, implicit memorials of the Holocaust. They are moving partly because of their poetic indirection—the incongruity between their almost liturgical subject and their casual, throwaway materials—and partly because of the artist's apparent desire to create an elegiac and historical art that is still resolutely private and handmade. (If the lamps were not so obviously the lamps of every college student's desk, if the electrical cords did not fall so awkwardly to the floor, if the altars looked just one little bit more like *altars*, the works would not be nearly so affecting.) And partly, I think, they are moving as a consequence of our knowledge of the fate of their subjects: probably gone, but not certainly. There is some atom of decency in this, something reticent and unexploitative—some refusal of obvious emotion—that permits the viewer to look and think without feeling only the reflexive emotions of shame and rage. In "Altars to Chases High School" Boltanski manages to stylize horror without aestheticizing it.

It might be said that Boltanski in the photographic pieces struggles to achieve with external devices what a great photographer achieves with internal ones: that Cameron's portrait of Herschel or Avedon's portraits of his father don't need darkened rooms and candlelight effects. They carry their own lights around with them, inside the frame. Yet Boltanski's simple, familiar visual metaphors—light in darkness, the human face as sacred material—can today have the force of revelation.

Perhaps Boltanski moves people because he is, in several senses, an artist of the enlightenment—an artist for whom the romantic dispute between natural states and made-up states seems productive rather than paralyzing. The subject of his art is the invention of innocence, but it seems to value innocence all the more for being invented. Like so many artists and writers now, Boltanski takes as the model for his art the doomed archeological dig—the search for knowledge that ends up in paradox, enigmas, and failure. But when he discovers the empty tomb at the end of that search he chooses to make it into a private chapel. His art begins in the dark and makes its own light.

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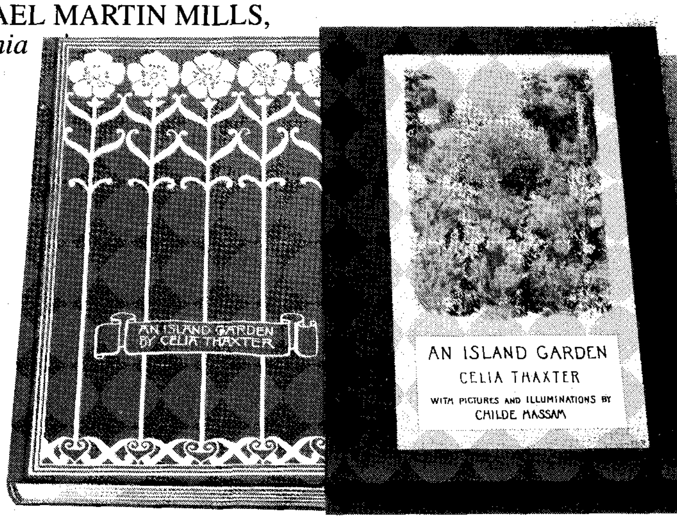
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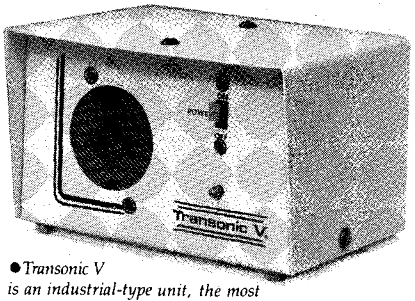

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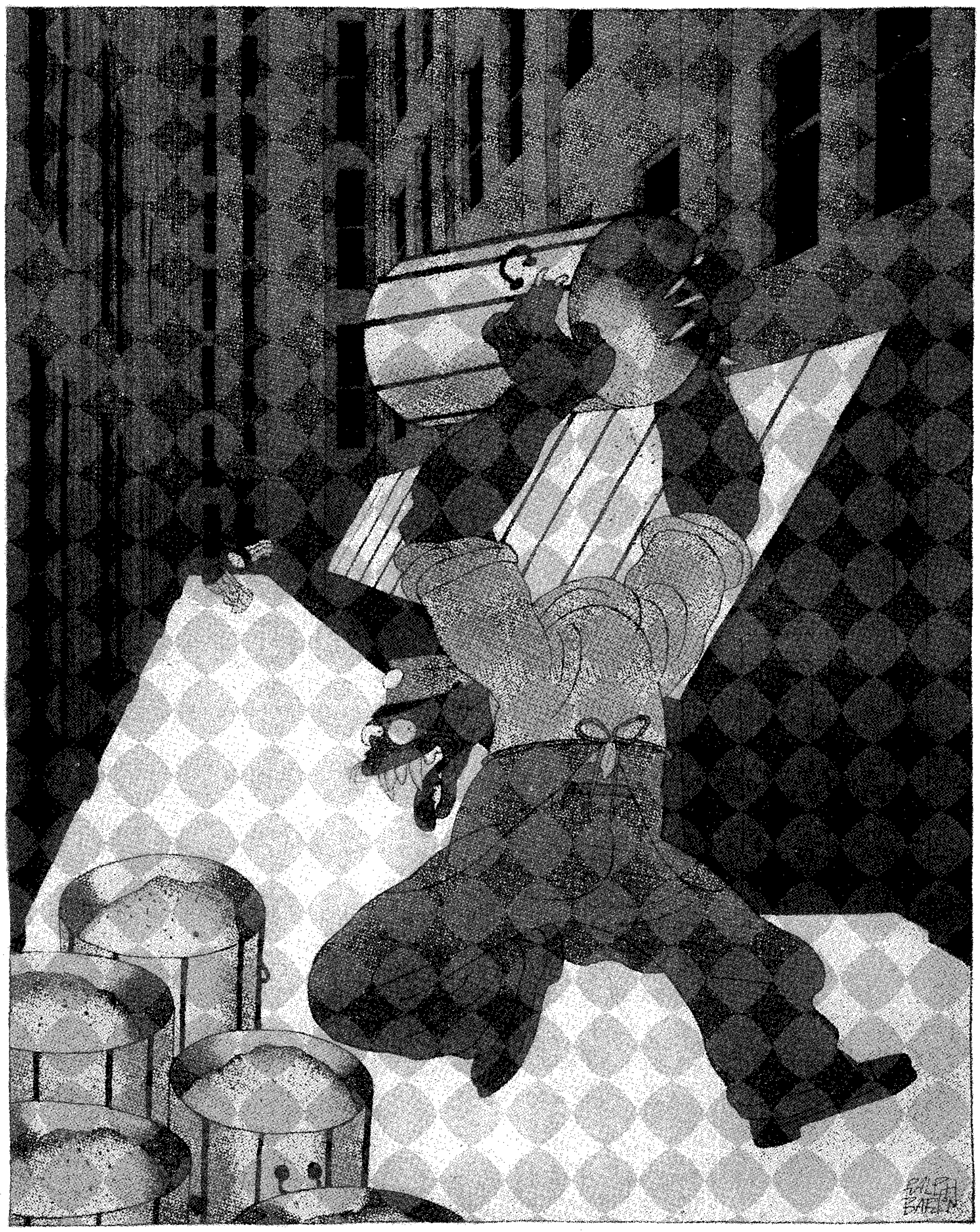
A CRITIC AT LARGE

A CASE OF MELANCHOLIA

THIS cartoon, which appeared in *The New Yorker* in April, 1926, and in several subsequent cartoon anthologies, haunts me. As an adolescent cartoon buff, I didn't think it terribly funny—just oddly intense, with something malevolent in the rendering of the ashman's simian limbs, drooping gargoylish head, fangs, pop eyes, and crazily lolling tongue. As a grown man, who has suffered some nights of noisy trash collection in the city of New York, I better appreciate its harsh truth, and the artful way the exaggerated perspective sets off the cacophonous reverberation of those distant hurled cans. The receding walls and the darkened windows, as uniform as prison windows, eat up the viewer.

Ralph Barton's drawings, like his signature, have a squared-off quality, a frame of high intention that suggests an aspiration beyond the momentary smile most cartoons are content to in-



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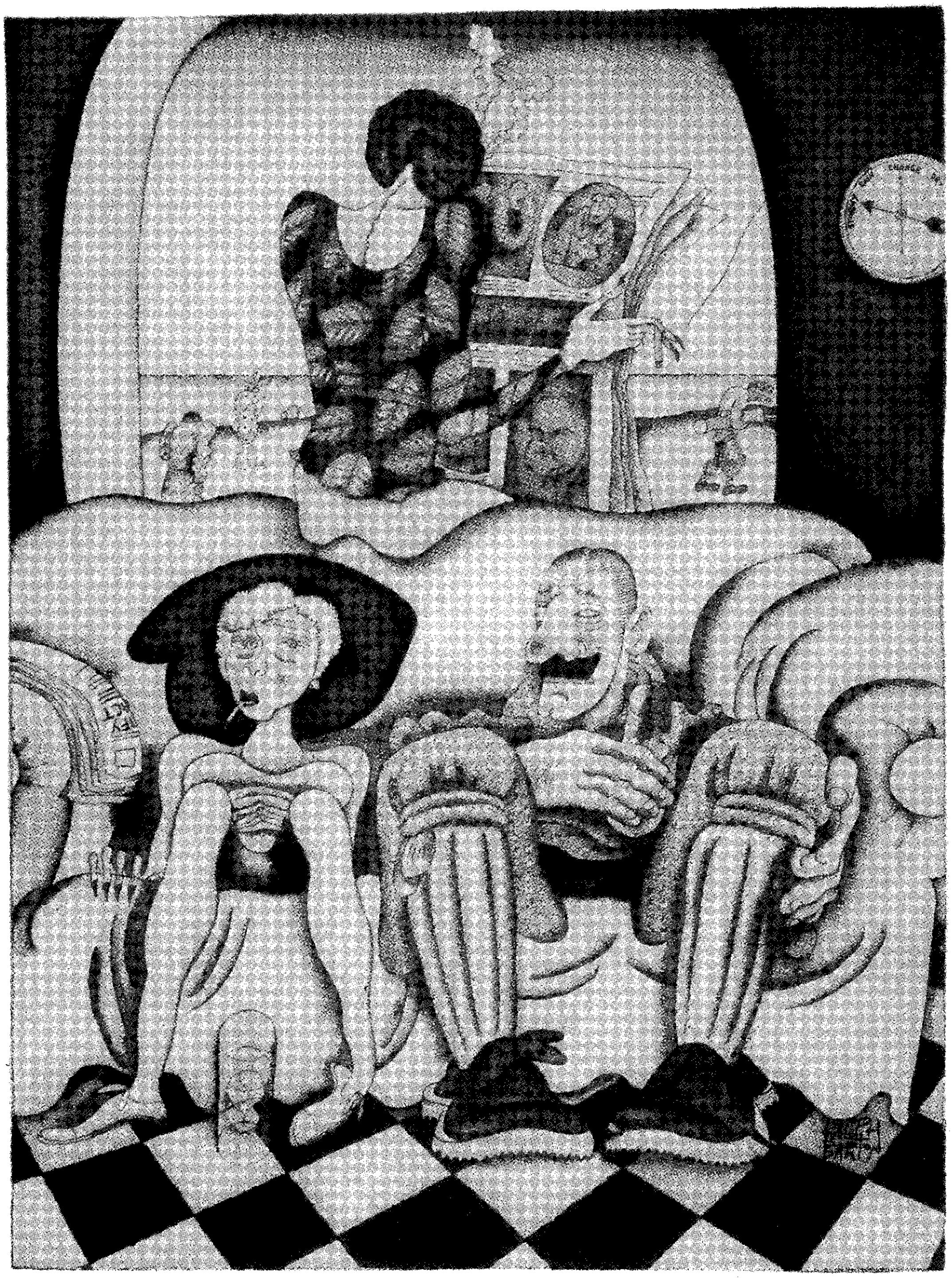

THE 1930'S

Weekend Guests—Sunday Morning after Saturday Night

duce. A cartoon traditionally aims to give all its information at a glance; it is a kind of calligraphy, which reduces marginal details to the most cursory scribble. But in Barton the background presses toward the foreground with an insistence found in Oriental art, and again in Cubism. He undertook for *The New Yorker* a series called "The 1930's" when the beginning of that decade seemed no more than a hungover extension of the nineteen-twenties. In "Weekend Guests," published in August, 1930, an extraordinary formality poses the bold triangle of main figures and foreshortens the two sunk in the sofa into separate body parts—legs, hands, and heads suspended in queasy malaise and surrounded by the geometrical jiggle of the lozenges of the tiles, the squares and ovals of the Sunday rotogravure, the ribs and ripples of the gentleman's country outfit, the overlapping rings of transparency in the lady's glass. Beyond the triangle, in stark and sickening sunlight, three smaller figures slouch doggedly in pursuit of a good outdoor time. The dazed, breeze-teased suffocation of a country weekend—the Sunday stuffy-sofa feeling—finds reinforced expression in the tight-knit stasis of the drawing, its crammed elegance. Barton's pen lines

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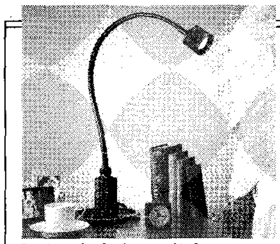

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are like wires that are all connected; his drawings give off a peculiar hum, a menace absent from the tidy lines of similar draftsmen, like Josef Čapek, Nicolas Bentley, Rea Irvin, and Gluyas Williams.

Ralph Waldo Emerson Barton was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in August of 1891. His father, Abraham Pool Barton, was a Missouri farm boy, the eldest son in a family of eleven, who put himself through college and law school; in his fifties he gave up his law practice to follow full time his secondary career as the publisher of a weekly metaphysical journal called *The Life* and as a lecturer on his philosophy of religion and healing. His published books include "The ABC of Truth, being Twenty-six Basic Lessons in the Science of Life," "The Bible and Eternal Punishment, Proving from the Original Languages that the Bible does not Teach the Doctrine," and "Why Are We Here, or the Meaning and Purpose of This Incarnation." He and his wife were close friends and Kansas City neighbors of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fillmore, the founders of the Unity Christianity movement. Mrs. Barton, née Catherine Josephine Wigginton, was a locally well-known portrait painter and a partner in her husband's religious enterprises; she herself published books expressing her beliefs, with such titles as "The Mother of the Living" and "The Interlude." Remarkably, she gave birth to Ralph, the youngest of her four children, when she was forty-four, and lived to the age of eighty-eight, surviving all her children but one. In interviews, she claimed that there had been an artist in her family for seven generations, and that since she had found art supplies, including paper, scarce in her girlhood she "made it one of her chief duties to see that her son was plentifully supplied with such things." His mother's studio was Ralph's main art school, though after attending the city's Central High School he briefly studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. He did drawings for both the major Kansas City newspapers, the *Journal-Post* and the *Star*, and a member of the *Star's* Art Department recalled of Barton, "He never could draw in the correct proportions, and he afterward capitalized on this." It is true, Barton's fine freedom of composition and line depends on a sure

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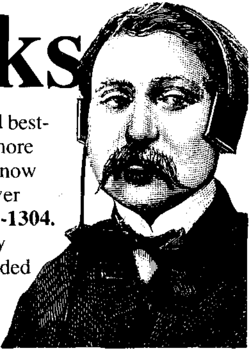

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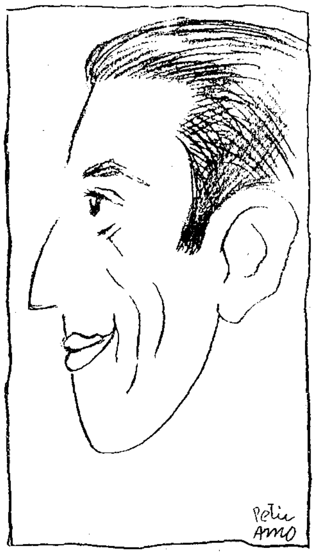
sense of when to abandon perspective and anatomy and when to adhere to them.

In 1910, at the age of nineteen, already married to his high-school sweetheart and already a father, Barton moved to New York City. He rose to prominence via the monosyllabic trio of old humor magazines, *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Life*, not to mention *Harper's Bazaar*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Vanity Fair*, which in 1924 described him as "the best known and most widely followed of our caricaturists." In this peak period he was paid as much as fifteen hundred dollars for a drawing. He was short, dapper, dark-haired, and blue-eyed, with elegant manners. He loved the theatre and was an ardent Francophile, having first travelled to Paris in 1915, to study art and to report the war in pictures for *Puck*. Friends nicknamed him the Commuter, for his frequent sojourns abroad. In 1927, the French government made him a chevalier of the Legion of Honor, the poet Paul Claudel presenting the decoration. Also in 1927, *The New Yorker* ran a page and a half on Barton, under the title "Through the Magnifying Glass." The fact-crammed piece, by Charles G. Shaw, emphasizes the transatlantic dandy's clothes:

> His haberdashery comes from Charvet's, Place Vendôme, and embraces a varied assortment of colored striped shirts, with drawers and collars of the same material to match each shirt, white silk undershirts, beige silk pajamas (emblazoned with white frogs), and white, watered-silk suspenders. Each of his pairs of trousers has its own pair of suspenders. . . . In Paris he carries a walking stick; in New York a sword cane. . . . In lieu of a scarfpin, a scarab seal ring encircles his cravat, and when indoors he is partial to Chinese slippers. . . . Chanel No. 22 is his customary perfume. His favored dressing gown is of a gallant jade hue.

Barton's highly specific tastes in champagne, wine, cigarettes, drawing pen, paper, and ink are also confided. We learn that he is remarkably tidy in person and, in his work, rapid but tardy, and we are told that he loathes mathematics, cannot drive, is sick of jazz, "rarely touches gin or whiskey but is extremely fond of Château Yquem," and "has been in love ninety-two times in all and remembers each of the girls' names." What's more, he has never voted, served on a jury, or contributed to charity. Though "in temperament he is definitely Latin," this exquisite "creature of the cosmopolis" may be one-sixteenth Cherokee, if we can credit "a scandalous legend to the effect that his great-great-grandmother was a beautiful Cherokee maid."

When Harold Ross founded *The New Yorker*, exactly sixty-four years ago, Barton figured as one of its advisory editors and as a prominent contributor, providing not only theatrical caricatures but tart and droll short reviews as captions. But Barton's frequent long stays in France interrupted the flow of his contributions. Surprisingly, Barton did only one cover for the magazine. Ross, a man of many nervous reactions, was made uneasy by what he felt was a macabre streak in Barton's work, and Barton, though a personal friend, was not his favorite artist—Peter Arno was—or anything like as central to the young magazine's workings and look as Rea Irvin. Ross preferred to sponsor fresh talents rather than to further reputations already established, and in the second half of the twenties Barton was riding high. In addition to doing copious magazine work, he had designed a theatre curtain—a panorama of caricatures—for the revue "Chauve-Souris," and he saw another panoramic drawing of celebrities made into a dress print. In 1925, he illustrated Anita Loos's best-selling novel "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and in 1928 its sequel, "But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes."



Ralph Barton

Barton married four times, and fathered two daughters—Natalie by his first wife, Marie Jennings, and Diana by his second wife, Anne Minnerly. His third wife, the actress Carlotta Monterey, became Eugene O'Neill's third wife, and Barton's fourth wife was Germaine Tailleferre, the well-known French composer—a member, with Poulenc and Milhaud, of Les Six.

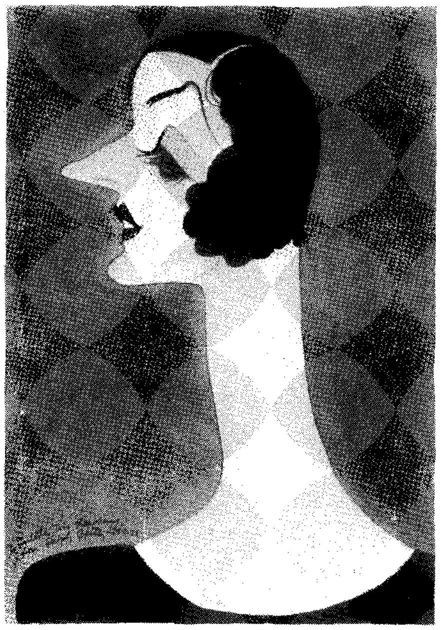
A month after his fourth divorce was final, and a few days after Carlotta returned from Europe with O'Neill, Barton committed suicide, three months short of his fortieth birthday. Around midnight on May 19, 1931, in his apartment, a penthouse at 419 East Fifty-seventh Street, he typed out a long note, which he titled "OBIT" in red ink; placed it and a shorter note to the maid on a table; laid on his bed a copy of Gray's "Anatomy" open to its illustrations of the human heart; got into bed, in silk pajamas; pulled the covers up to his chin; and, while holding a cigarette in his left hand, shot himself through the right temple.

His death was front-page news in the *Times* of May 21st. The headline "RALPH BARTON ENDS HIS LIFE WITH PISTOL" got equal billing with "CIVIL WAR IN CHINA IS STARTING NORTH." The *Times* told how his maid, Mary Jefferson, had observed his black mood when he returned to the apartment on May 19th. She said to him, "You're not going to do anything foolish? If you are, I'm going to stay here." The story continues, "The artist laughed and said it was safe for her to go." She found his body when she came back to the penthouse around ten the next morning; the note to her accompanied thirty-five dollars as pay and apologized for its not being more. A curious crowd gathered outside the apartment building, but only his brother, Homer, a New York actor, and, in the afternoon, the artist Neysa McMein were admitted. Homer said to reporters, "It was a matter of impulse, I am sure, for Ralph was very impulsive. . . . Ralph did not consider his action, I know, because he was looking forward to the summer in the apartment. He had brought in some new flower boxes to decorate it." Barton's mother, reached in Kansas City, said, "I can't believe Ralph shot himself. There must be something about that we do not know." His sister Ethel said, "Ralph was such a gentle spirited person that it seems impossible that he should have had a gun in his apartment."

The assistant medical examiner, Raymond B. Miles, took the open Gray's "Anatomy" to indicate that Barton had contemplated shooting himself through the heart, and had decided against it. The police released the text of the "OBIT" that Barton had composed, and the *Times* reproduced it in full, singling out for sensationalistic emphasis its pathetic homage to the present Mrs. O'Neill, "my beautiful lost angel, Carlotta, the only woman I ever loved and whom I respect and admire above all the rest of the human race. She is the one person who could have saved me had I been savable. She did her best. No one ever had a more devoted or more understanding wife. I do hope that she will understand what my malady was and forgive me a little." His note concluded, "I kiss my dear children—and Carlotta," and it was signed not with his name but with seven "X"s.

The "dear children"—his two daughters—scarcely figure in the skimpy Barton literature. In the newspaper stories following his death, this paragraph from the Kansas City *Times* (the *Star's* morning version) of May 21, 1931, which is ascribed to "The Star's Leased Wire Service," offers to flesh out their reality: "When [Barton] and Chaplin went abroad together recently, they called on a 22-year-old girl who could speak to them, shyly and only for a moment, from the cloistered precincts of a French convent. She was Natalie, Barton's eldest daughter, a young novitiate, who expects soon to take the veil. Another daughter, Diana, 10, is in school in Lausanne, Switzerland. Today after Barton had been found dead, a letter came addressed to him in childish handwriting. On the envelope was a heart, with an arrow, and the legend, 'I love you.' That was from Diana." A somewhat florid posthumous two-part biography in *College Humor* (February and April, 1932), by Dorothy Giles, tells us that Barton, when he was divorcing his first wife, in 1917 (he sued, she apparently having found comfort with a Kansas City *Star* artist during Barton's first French excursion), was awarded custody of Natalie. For a time he and the little dark-haired girl lived in a tiny apartment, in Washington Heights. A friend is quoted as saying, "I don't believe he was ever as truly happy again as he was just then, when he and Natalie were together." However, when he and his second wife divorced, in 1922, Barton went to Paris, and Natalie was placed in a Kansas City convent school, run by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion. When, in 1929, Natalie announced her decision to become a nun, he took her off with him to tour Europe for a year. Dorothy Giles writes, "He would show her the world and its glories, then let her decide[,] if she would, to give it up. But at the year's end, with Italy behind them, with London and Paris and Vienna offering their all, her answer was the same—'I want to be a nun.' And true to his own agnostic's code of allowing to each mind freedom to decide its own fate, he agreed. With a sardonic smile he drew the check for his daughter's dowry, in her cloister." The author then asks, "I wonder if that isn't really the end of Ralph Barton's story?"

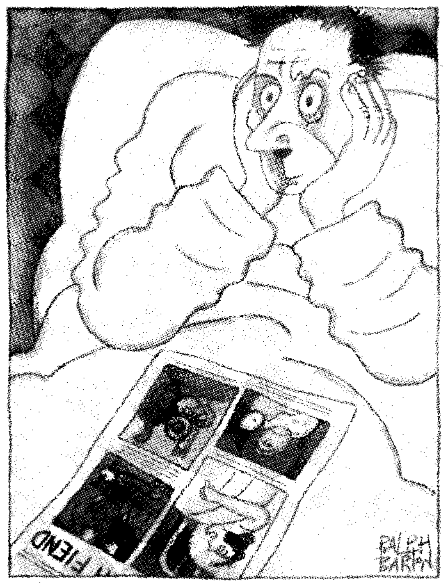
BARTON and Carlotta, a former Miss California, were married from 1923 to 1926—the third marriage for her as well as for him. They were renowned for their parties. Barbara and Arthur Gelb's biography of Eugene O'Neill quotes the photographer Nickolas Muray as saying: "Ralph and Carlotta used to give very lavish parties. I remember one party when Jimmy Walker was present. Another time they had a professional wrestling match staged in their living room. And at one party Charlie Chaplin, who was an intimate friend of Ralph's . . . arrived and took over. He did double-talk in half a dozen languages. . . . He played a number of instruments—violin, trombone, clarinet, piano, among others. There was an apparently inexhaustible supply of food and liquor, always elegantly served." And Ilka Chase remembered, "I used to love to go there, because they had wonderful books and pictures and delicious little dinners; but they dined at half past six even when Carlotta wasn't playing, and I never could understand why. It had something to do with their temperaments, I imagine; their temperaments were prominent, and everybody relaxed when they got a divorce." In their divorce action, Carlotta charged Barton, an incorrigible philanderer, with "misconduct at the Hotel des Artistes, 1 West Sixty-seventh Street."



Carlotta

His posthumous homage to Carlotta was a considerable embarrassment to the O'Neills, and may have been meant to be so. Carl Van Vechten lunched with them on May 20th and later told an interviewer, "[Carlotta] couldn't understand why he'd dragged her into it. Barton, she insisted, hadn't loved her in years." In a statement to the press, she claimed that she had not seen or heard from her ex-husband "since her divorce from him more than five years ago." Van Vechten's reminiscence elaborates: "Personally, I thought it a clear case of ego, of his wanting all possible attention at his death. He resented her marrying someone more famous than himself and wanted to upset them. I knew Ralph intimately, I'd seen him only a short time before. He was heavily in debt, he'd lived beyond his means for years, he'd seen and done everything, and saw no point in going on. Don't forget, too, that the Great Depression was on—people weren't in the mood for his sophisticated art. The market for his stuff had shrunk, and he could see only lean times ahead, so he decided to go out in a splash of publicity."

The times, however, couldn't have been impossibly lean for an artist enjoying the friendship and patronage of Harold Ross, whose magazine was prospering amid the slump. Ross in a letter to Barton in France urged him to return: "You have got to conform to a certain extent and you had better do it here, regaining your old supremacy. Here you will be supreme again." Barton sometimes appeared twice in a single issue, and had created several running departments for himself—"The Inquiring Reporter," "Heroes of the Week," "The Graphic Section." *The New Yorker* scrapbooks show a flurry of Barton contributions in the weeks before his death, including a "Graphic Section" containing a small, prophetic cameo of a man beyond cheering up. In addition to the arrival of the O'Neills, Barton had recently been embarrassed by reports of his having been jilted by Ruth Kresge, a five-and-dime heiress; a few days after the O'Neills docked, she embarked for Europe with her fiancé, "Rufus Clark Caulkins, onetime Princeton football player." Undoubtedly, Barton, who less than two years earlier had protested in an interview, "I have too much money. . . . An artist ought to be prohibited from earning as much as I do," lost heavily in the stock-market crash. But his "OBIT" attempted a psychological self-diagnosis, blaming depression rather than the Depression:

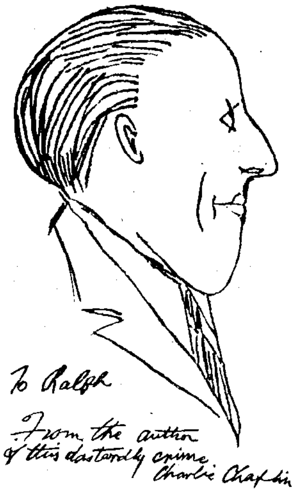


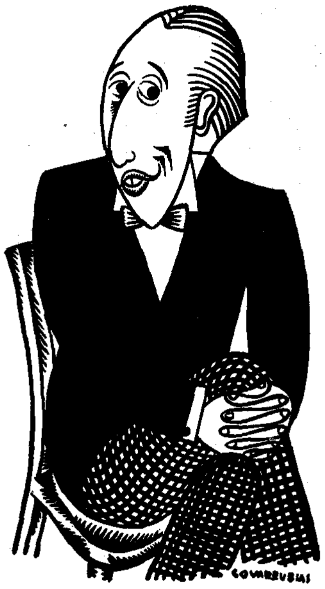
The Man Who Started the Day by reading a tabloid newspaper contemplates the beauties of life.

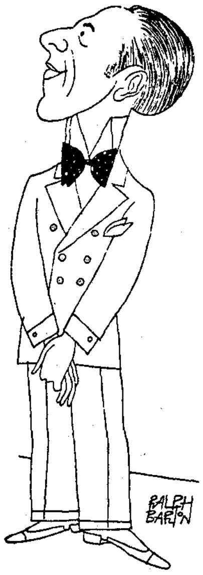
> Any sane doctor knows that the reasons for suicide are invariably psychopathological and the true suicide type manufactures his own difficulties. I have had few real difficulties. I have had, on the contrary, an exceptionally glamorous life, as life goes; and I have had more than my share of affection and appreciation.
>
> The most charming, intelligent and important people I have known have liked me, and the list of my enemies is very flattering to me. I have always had excellent health, but since my early childhood I have suffered from a melancholia, which in the last five years has begun to show definite symptoms of manic-depressive insanity.
>
> It has prevented my getting anything like the full value out of my talent, and the past three years has made work a torture to do at all. It has made it impossible for me to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. I have run from wife to wife, from house to house and from country to country in a ridiculous effort to escape from myself. . . .
>
> No one thing is responsible for this and no one person—except myself. If the gossips insist on something more definite and thrilling as a reason, let them choose my pending appointment with the dentist or the fact that I happened to be painfully short of cash at the moment. . . . After all, one has to choose a moment; and the air is always full of reasons at any given moment. I did it because I am fed up with inventing devices for getting through twenty-four hours a day and with bridging over a few months periodically with some beautiful interest, such as a new gal who annoyed me to the point where I forgot my own troubles.

A man within minutes of ending his life must be listened to; Barton knew his own mental state. This was not his first suicide attempt. Harold Ross, after Barton's death, revealed that eight months earlier the artist had poisoned himself and been narrowly revived by friends who found him in his apartment. Two months after this, he accompanied Neysa McMein to Charleston, where he bought the suicide revolver. His tendency toward depression was noticed by many friends, including Chaplin, who earlier in 1931, because of Barton's low mood, had invited him at the last minute to join his post-"City Lights" jaunt to Europe. Barton's behavior in London became pathological. According to David Robinson's biography of Chaplin, "After the first week or so [Barton] could not be persuaded to leave the hotel, but wandered the suite and the public corridors." He was seen fondling the revolver, and on one occasion "Chaplin was alarmed and irritated to discover that Barton had cut the wires on the electric clocks, for reasons known only to himself." Chaplin paid for his return passage and gave him twenty-five pounds, since Barton appeared to be without funds. Somewhere in their time together those last months, Chaplin sketched a caricature of Barton; it has a sad redolence absent from Miguel Covarrubias's caricature and Barton's own, both of which emphasize the dandy. Barton's more painterly self-portrait, however, is deeply melancholic. Its elongated face reminded him of El Greco, and he inscribed it "With apologies to Greco/and God/RB."

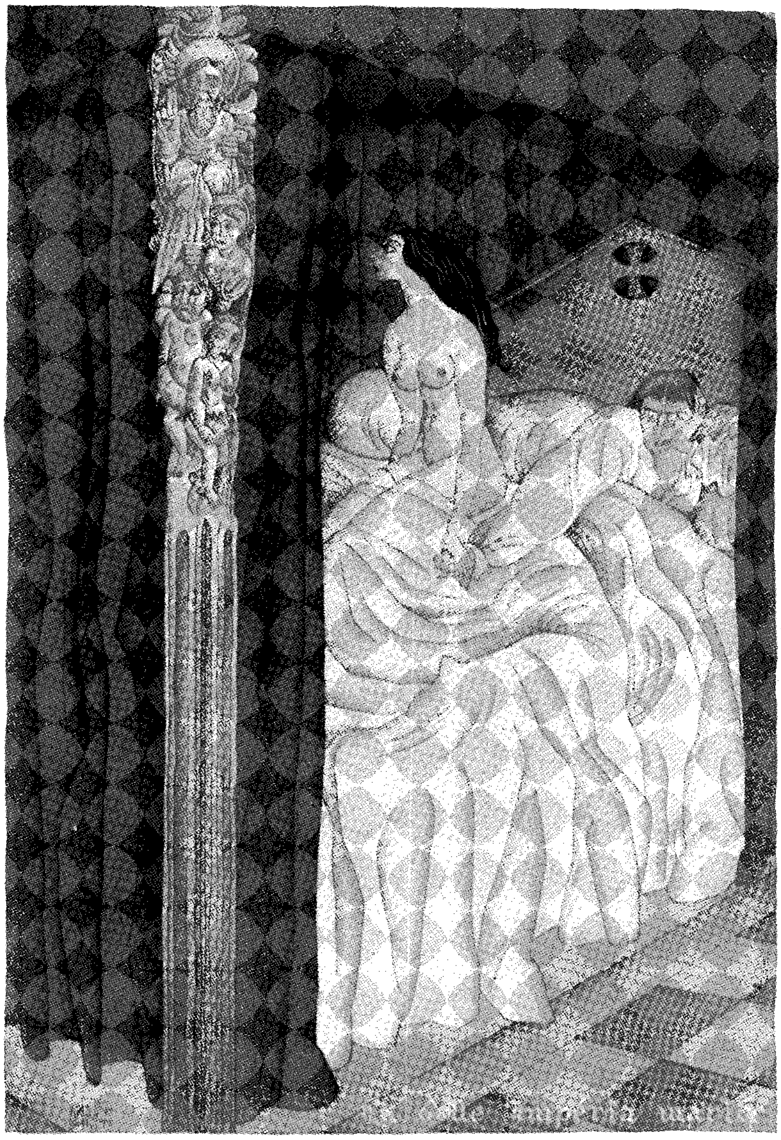
His childhood was saturated in religion, of an odd sort. In "The Jazz Age, As Seen Through the Eyes of Ralph Barton, Miguel Covarrubias, and John Held, Jr.," the catalogue of a show of drawings put on at the museum of the Rhode Island School of Design in 1968, Richard Merkin, the organizer, writes of Barton, "From childhood he was on intimate terms with tragedy and with the mechanics of madness. His parents, heartbroken after the death of his young sister, became 'natural scientists,' and began their own religion. They published a small magazine and took in patients to be treated. It is certain that this had its effect on young Barton who quickly came to abhor the trappings of sickness and disease." Kansas City was the milieu of which Hemingway, in the story "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" (describing a young man's self-castration), wrote, "The dirt blew off the hills that now have been cut down, and Kansas City was very like Constantinople." The Midwest had a sere spirituality that no amount of acquired atheism and Eastern sophistication could quench. Apologies to God kept





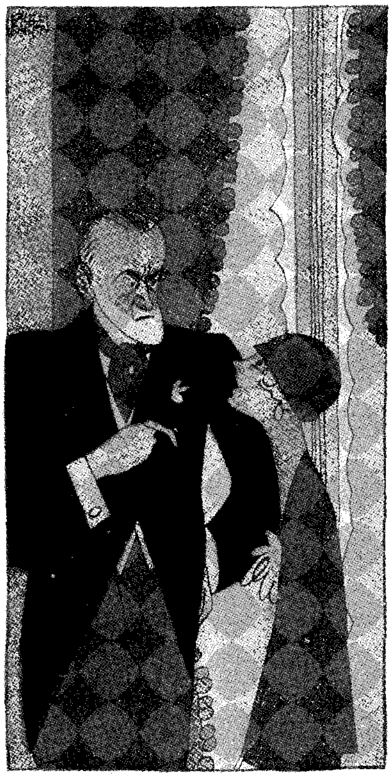


coming. Barton's was an extreme case of what Merkin calls "the exaggerated urbanity of the provincial." Even New York wasn't urbane enough for him, and he spent years in Paris, where, in the words of Thomas Craven, "he outfopped the French at their own game, dressed like something midway between a toreador and an aesthete, and had many imitators among the young caricaturists." Socially, Barton had chosen to make a splash and run with the rich and the very famous, and that is a hard race for an artist to maintain. Yet the facility, fullness, and delicacy of his work right to the end lead us to decry his suicide, and to scan this work's lighthearted surface for a clue.

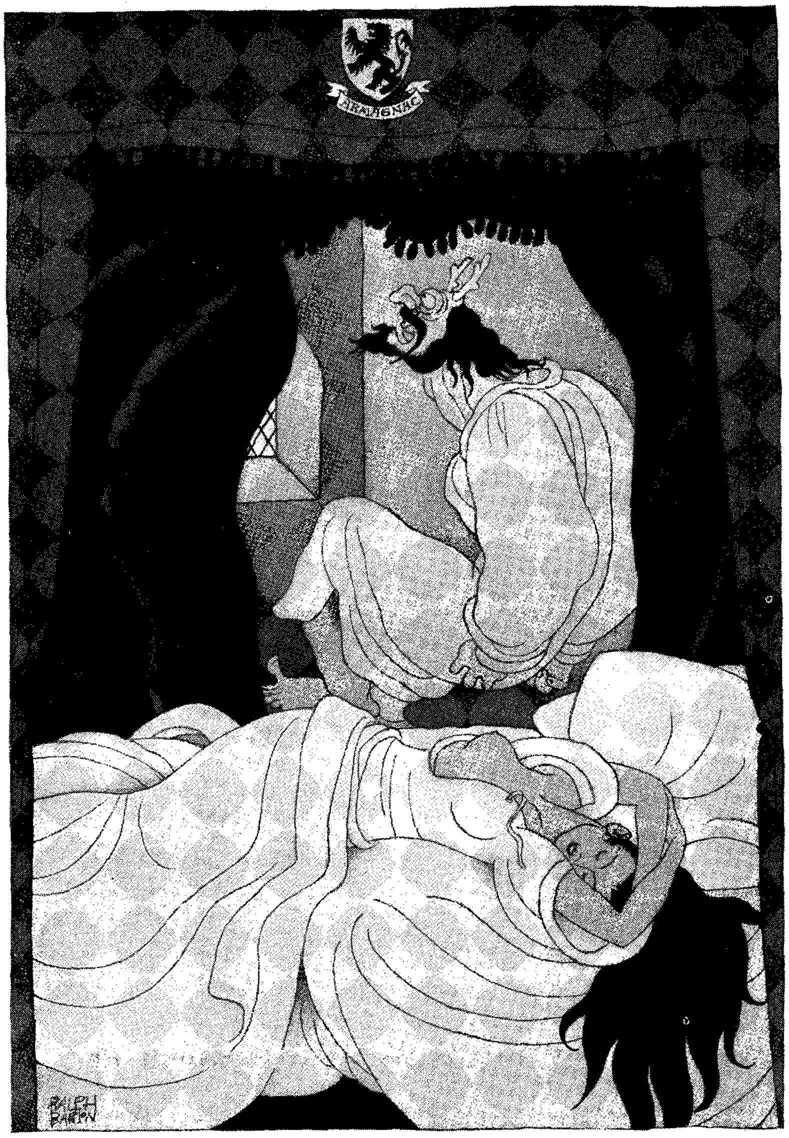


HIS drawings, like Modigliani's, combine a high pitch of sensuality with a passion for design. The two artists shared a taste for the archaic: Barton once claimed, "The old Greeks taught me. . . . I used to go up to the Metropolitan Museum and spend hours studying the figures and decorations on ancient Greek pottery." He liked a tight space. His little illustrations for "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" are fitted into narrow, tall rectangles, crammed with truncated detail like lucid keyholes. Where the top of a panel threatens to be empty, as in the picture of "Dr. Froyd," the artist fills it with satisfyingly animated scallops and fringe buttons. The illustrations for the Boni & Liveright limited edition of Balzac's "Droll Stories," however, constitute his masterpiece in this line. Executed during Barton's marriage to Germaine Tailleferre, they consummate his lifelong Francophilia; he travelled to Touraine for appropriate architectural detail, which overflows the backgrounds. The foregrounds are, thanks to the nature of the tales, more often than not occupied by naked females, and, in sum, these enchanting nudes sing Barton's hymn to life. The men in the illustrations are often cuckolded or impotent, alienated from vitality and beauty; in one scene of marital discontent the artist has troubled to carve the bedpost with a full depiction of that primal estrangement, the Fall and Expulsion from Eden. In another connubial scene, the behorned husband seems to bay at the moon while bedclothes and bed curtains are possessed by a rhythmic agitation of restlessness and longing. The sleeping woman with her bared breast is alone tranquil; the visual repository of purity, she is exempt from what Max Jacob, in speaking of Modigliani, called "a need for crystalline purity." Such a need can easily encourage self-destructiveness—for what is purer than death?

Jacob also said of Modigliani that he was "cutting, but as fragile as glass." The *Times* obituary, presumably voicing the contemporary verdict, spoke of Barton's "cynical style of art" and of "a devastating humor and a bitter irony," and claimed, "His writings were like his drawings—sharp." Yet Barton's drawings, these many decades later, do not seem especially cutting.



"Dr. Froyd seemed to think that I was quite a famous case."



His generalized cartoon figures have something of the lollipop-headed innocence of his contemporary John Held, Jr.,'s flappers and party boys. His caricatures are not indignant, like Daumier's, or frenzied, like Gerald Scarfe's; they are decoratively descriptive. In reviewing a book by Covarrubias, Barton wrote, "It is not the caricaturist's business to be penetrating; it is his job to put down the figure a man cuts before his fellows in his attempt to conceal the writhings of his soul." Barton had the born caricaturist's abnormal sensitivity to facial configuration, and a casual expertise at tellingly finding his way among the interlocking bumps and creases of physiognomy. He admired Max Beerbohm,. and, though the Englishman's line is as woolly and limp as the American's is wiry and crisp, an affinity can be felt in the carefree anatomy and formal balance of their tableaux.

But the calmly subtle inscriptions on Beerbohm's drawings were beyond Barton, or beyond the audience available to him, and the dandy from Kansas City produced no equivalent of the small but exquisite body of essays and parodies that give Beerbohm a permanent niche in English literature. Among the nonchemical reasons for Barton's growing unhappiness must have been the failure of his career to develop a significant literary side, though he sporadically exerted himself in that direction. "He sticks out his tongue while working and would rather write than draw," Charles G. Shaw declared. Barton wrote two books. His "Science in Rhyme Without Reason" (1924) is a spirited exercise in the light-verse mode then fashionable, slight but charmingly illustrated, and showing—perhaps not surprising in a man whose father wrote of "the twenty-six basic lessons in the science of life"—a certain systematic turn of mind: the book has a bibliography and an index, and its contents tackle, in alphabetical order, "Aeronautics," "Æsthetics," "Astronomy," "Bacteriology," etc. As a poet, Barton can be hasty and metrically unstrict but also nimble. The dedication runs, touchingly in the light of later events:

Please accept these *entremets*,
Sweet Carlotta Monterey.

"Evolution" lays out with considerable precision such prehistoric developments as

A hydrosphere then did appear,
Which fell to earth as boiling tears,
And, after several million years,
Produced some rather tepid seas

and

In order came the zoophyte;
The Palæolithic trilobite;
True fishes, crabs amphibian;
Then reptiles in the Permian;
And then the giant dinosaurs,
And next our flying ancestors.

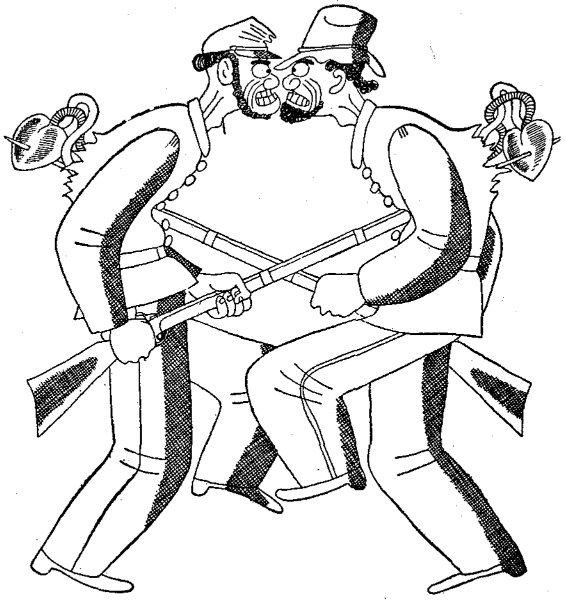
"Natural History," but for its awkward fourth line, is a perfect little verbal mechanism:

The Cuckoo
Is at its best
In clocks.
Outside of clocks
It stocks
The titlark's nest
With eggs;
Then begs
Both food and rest.
It thrives;
But drives
The titlark coo-coo.

Though no Hilaire Belloc or Arthur Guiterman, Barton plays their game acceptably, somewhat as Chaplin could play the clarinet, the violin, the trombone, and the piano. Barton's one prose volume, "God's Country" (1929), constitutes a less happy attempt to turn systematic exposition into jokes —a three-hundred-and-thirty-page facetious revisionist history of the United States from Columbus to Hoover. The Presidents are lampooned as monarchs (Zachary the Rough and Ready, Franklin the Debonair); the Presidency is renamed the Misterhood; fanciful contending parties, such as Uniboodlists and Multiboodlists (an echo of Unity Christianity and its Trinitarian competitors?), are invented; and sexual shenanigans not entirely fanciful are numbered among the Presidential acts. Barton had done his homework, and some bleak historical truths register: "They [the American people] elected Franklin Pierce to the Misterhood because they felt that his absolutely colorless record gave promise that he would not annoy them with the political issues of the day." Ring Lardner's flights into nonsense, H. L. Mencken's mockery of the American booboisie and its sacred myths, and a fashionable left-wing scorn of capitalism stand behind "God's Country"; but the flippant, bantering tone suitable to capsule theatre notices does not quite do when it is applied to the grave facts of history. Here, for instance, is Barton's verbal cartoon of Lincoln's assassination:

> On the evening of the 14th of April, 1865, Abraham attended Ford's Theatre in Washington. When he entered his box, a great burst of applause went up from the house, for the people of his time loved and appreciated him. The Mister was obliged to stand up and take bow after bow. An actor out of work, standing at the back of the house, became blind with jealousy at the sight of a non-Equity man getting such a hand. He entered the box from the rear and shot Abraham dead.
>
> Dead, that is, as far as this mortal coil is concerned. On the morrow, God sent a shaft of pure white light down from on high to Number 576 Tenth Street, N. W., and sucked his immortal soul up to the Public Thing of heaven. There, Abraham joined the company of the saints, for there is nothing that the Almighty admires so much as a man who has served as Mister of the United States during a bloody war.

It makes an uneasy mix: the date and the address are exact, the assassination's motivation is farcical, and the Almighty's alleged fondness for bloody Presidents needs to be more earnestly examined. As in the Civil War sketch that accompanies this chapter, real hearts (thanks, perhaps, to Gray's "Anatomy") pop disturbingly from papery bodies. A real indignation ineffectively seethes within Barton's burlesque of American history; a kind of prolonged sneer results, which too rarely provokes either outright laughter or serious thought. "Repellent," "not much fun," "rather dull," and "entirely negligible" were among the epithets of contemporary reviewers. "God's Country," published in the year of the stock-market crash, flopped, and Barton never again tried anything so ambitious. His years of not "getting anything like the full value out of my talent" had begun. Yet what a talent it was! Even hobbled by melancholy and spendthrift ways, it outclassed most of the competition. The *Times*, the day after it reported the suicide, groped to express a sense of loss, adding this to an account of a press conference that O'Neill gave: "In the meanwhile the body of the artist . . . lay in lonely state in one of the small chapels of the Campbell Funeral Church. The city which had once acclaimed his work had apparently forgotten him."



What loyalty to the flag can be made to lead to when the stars and stripes are re-arranged into two designs instead of one.

We do not expect our humorous artists to die young. George Price and William Steig, who first appeared in this magazine during Barton's last year, are still hard at it, week after week. Ralph Barton's chucked career hauntingly reverberates. Neysa McMein, herself a dedicated professional, asked him while they were in Charleston together, "Don't you want to be a great artist? Of course, you are a swell artist now, but don't you *want* a *great* future?" He answered, "No, I think not. I've had everything," and a few days later he bought himself the revolver, having failed to do the job with poison. Six months later, he used it. With his final debonair gesture the creator of the black-hearted ashman appropriated the Stygian glamour of those poets who, despairing of the noise, opt for silence.

—John Updike

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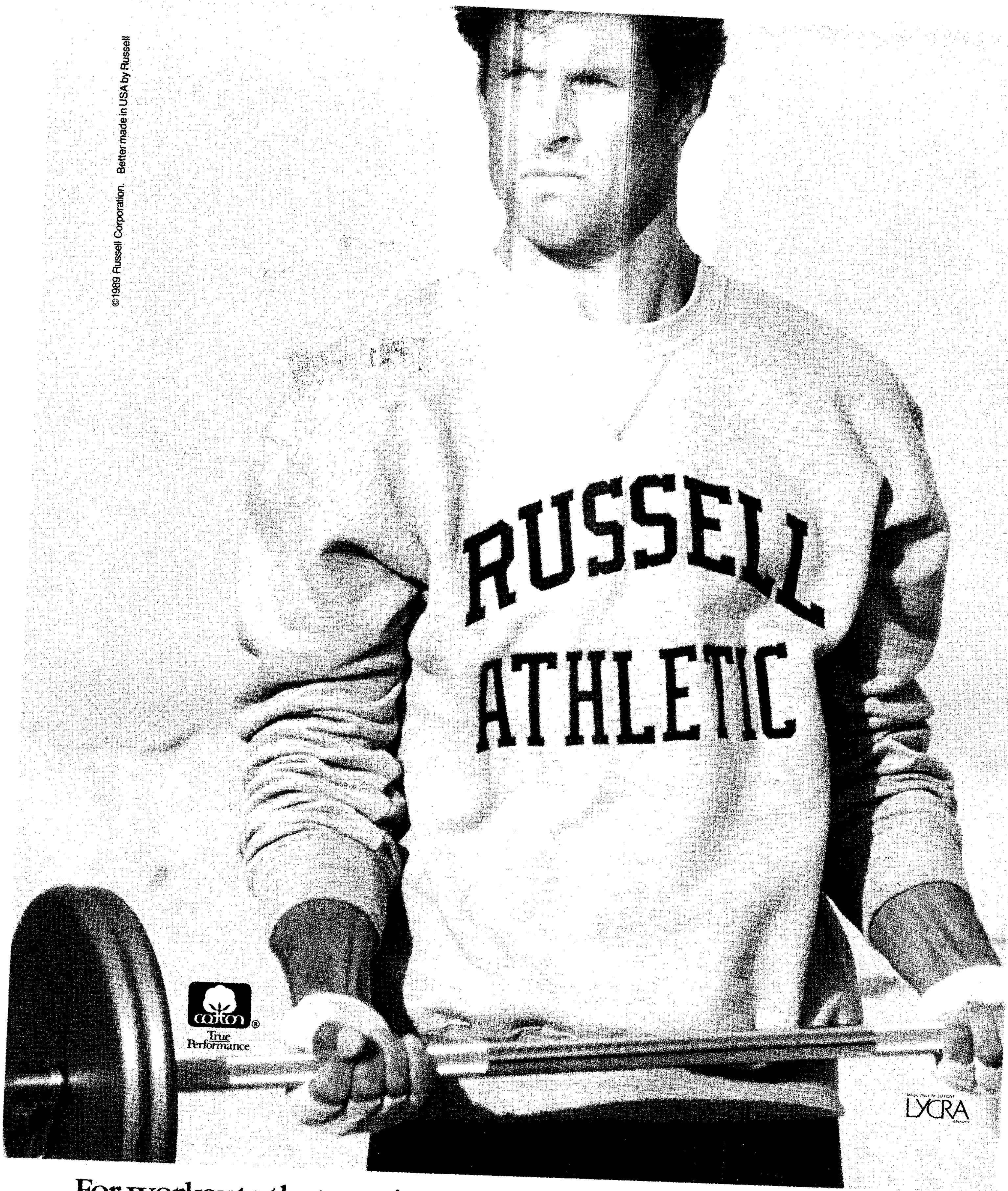

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